LAKSHMANA PILLAI

A BIOGRAPHY

தமிழ்ப் பல்கலைக்கழக நூலகம்
13 1902

GANA VISARADA

M. S. RAMASWAMI AIYAR,

B. A., B. L., L. T.

(Late of the Madura Bar)

PRINTED AT THE

SRI VILAS PRESS, TRIVANDRUM.

1942.

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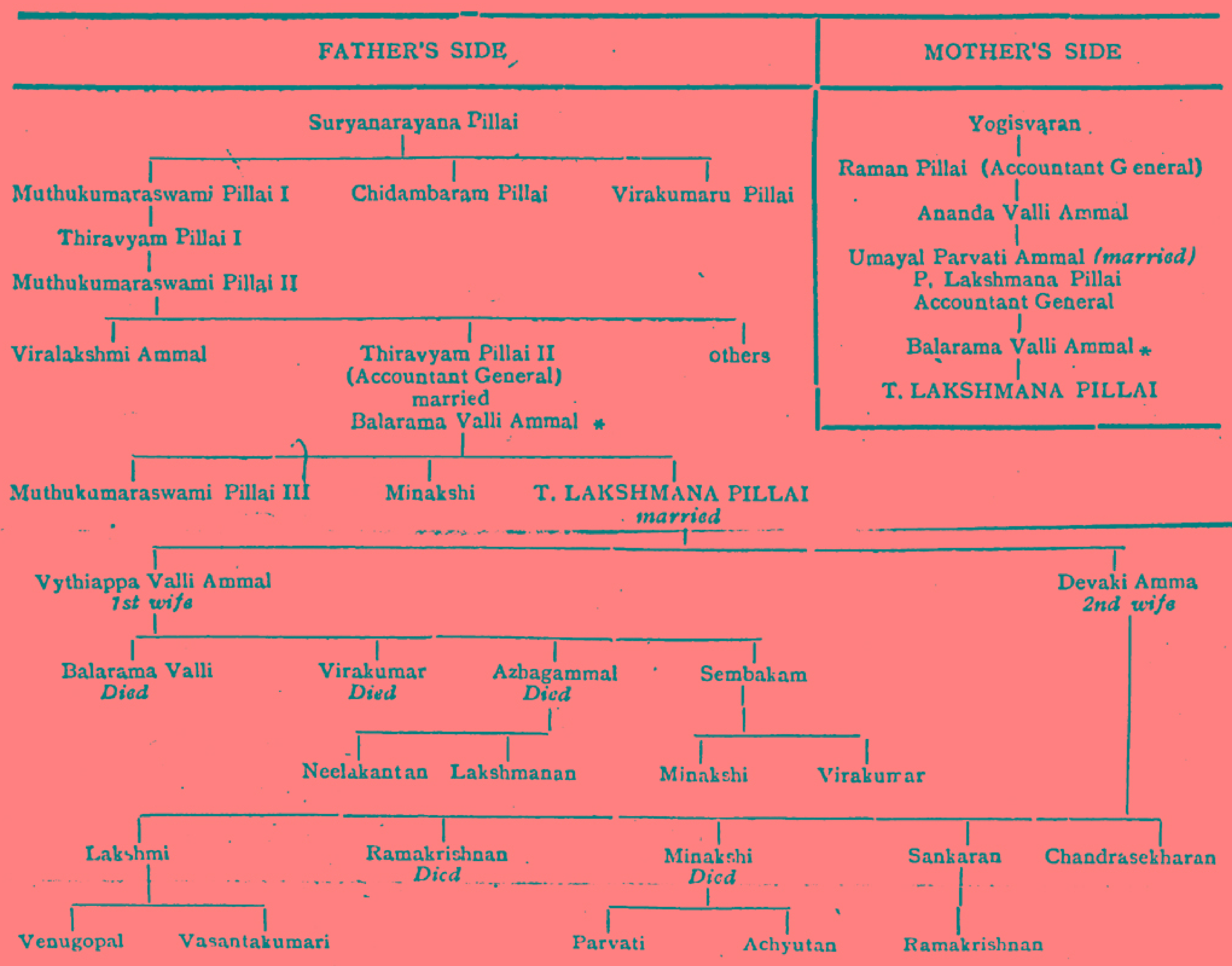

PREFACE

While, all over the world, there had been a very fond attempt to give a deathless lot to names ignoble, born to be forgot; India allowed dark oblivion to absorb the names of even her noblest children, with the result that traditional excrescences grew over their otherwise genuine biographies. Such had been the lot of Thiagaraja and Gopalakrishna Bharati.

The recent publication of the two monumental "Autobiographies" of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru served to effect a change in our angle of vision, and even impelled us to take an unspeakable delight in *Biography*.

Of this flowing tide, I take advantage and launch my *Life of Lakshmana Pillai*, in order that it may reach its expectant readers, influence their hearts, inspire them with hope, and rouse them into action by illustrating to them the efficacy of patient purpose, resolute work, and steadfast integrity in enabling them to work out an honourable competency and a solid reputation, despite any obstacles in their way.

There is not a single person in the street, but we should like to know his biography, his trials, his successes, and his failures. How much more truly might this be said of the persons who had made their mark in particular fields of activity and given us a rich inheritance?

To write a person's life, it is desirable that the biographer should have personally known him. Look, for instance, at the peculiar charm (due to the biographer's personal knowledge of the subject of biography) of Boswell's *Johnson*, Johnson's *Savage*, Lockhart's *Scott*, Moore's *Byron*, and Swaminathier's *Minakshisundaram Pillai*.

Again, if in a biography nothing but the bright side of the characters is shown, the reader will sit down in despondency and think it utterly impossible to imitate them in anything; for, they will find therein only demigods, whom they may respect, but keep themselves at a respectable distance from, rather than fallible fellow-beings, whom they may love and associate themselves with. Hence, perhaps, Oliver Cromwell's outspoken direction to his painter, *viz*:— "Paint me as I am, warts and all."

How far, then, I made right use of my personal knowledge of Sri. Lakshmana Pillai as well as of the materials he furnished to me and, again, how far I have succeeded in adhering to the principle that, in biography, as in portraiture, there must be not only *light*, but also *shade*,—I leave the reader to judge.

M. S. RAMASWAMI AIYAR.

"BAI BHAVAN"
TRIPLICANE
1ST MARCH 1942.

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CORRIGENDA.

The Reader is hereby requested to first have the following corrections duly made and, then, proceed to peruse the book.

Page	Line	Error	Correction
1	3rd line.	alike.	Alike,
2	8th line.	Neet.	Neet.
4	5th line from the bottom.	கற்கக்கசடற	கற்க கசடற
6	7th line from the bottom.	Lasted thronghout life	Lasted even now.
7	7th line.	pulled down,	pulled down;
17	12th line.	85.	85"
19	8th line from the bottom.	Tamil	Tamil"
22	8th line from the bottom.	Gospel—Test.	Gospel Text
22	3rd line from the bottom.	Jugglers	Juggler's
24	Last line.	"Soon.	Soon.
26	Last line.	engineer	Engineet.
27	3rd line.	engineer.	Engineer.
28	10th line.	marriage.	marriage" ?
30	15th line.	whenever.	when even
31	4th line.	Mr.	Sri.
33	11th line.	business.	business?
33	15th line.	poetry.	Poetry.
62	1st line.	Peravipcrumal.	Piraviperumal.

Page	Line	Error	Correction
64	6th line from the bottom.	order.	Order
65	10th line.	private secretary.	Private Secretary.
65	11th line.	salt.	Salt.
74	6th line.	1904.	1902
74	3rd line from the bottom.	1092	1902
94	13th line.	Poornachandrika.	Malavi.
95	2nd line from the bottom.	Shall.	Shell.
112	16th line.	25	20
128	4th line.	Insert "even" between "could" and "in"	
128	12th line.	Regulation.	Regulations.
130	8th line from the bottom.	In	On
138	10th line from the bottom.	Insert "of" between "some" and "sri"	
139	2nd line.	லஹுவ	லஹுவு
147	7th line from the bottom.	ஸமஸ்தே யோகா உச்யதே	ஸமத்வம் யோக உச்யதே
161	2nd line from the bottom.	உதமார்த்தண்டா	உதய மார்த்தாண்டா
168	5th line from the bottom.	Juggling friends.	The Juggling fiends
169	7th line.	Insert 'the' between 'speak' & 'truth'	
172	13th line.	on langht.	Onslaught.
175	Second Footnote.	108.	109.

Group Photo

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Sri T. Lekshmana Pillai's
Oi-l Painting Portrait Unveiled on August 3, 1935

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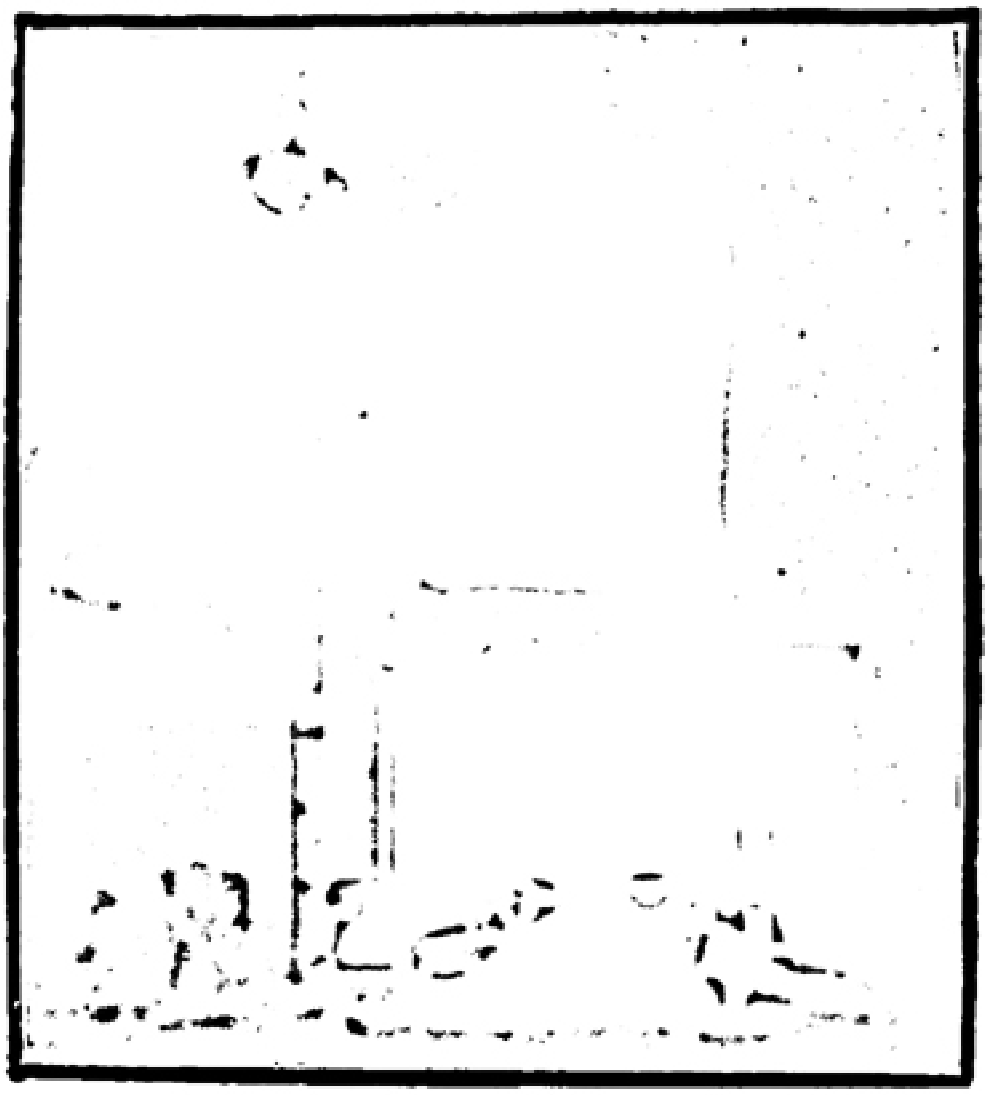

Pillai's Portrait adorning a wall of the Travancore University Buildings.

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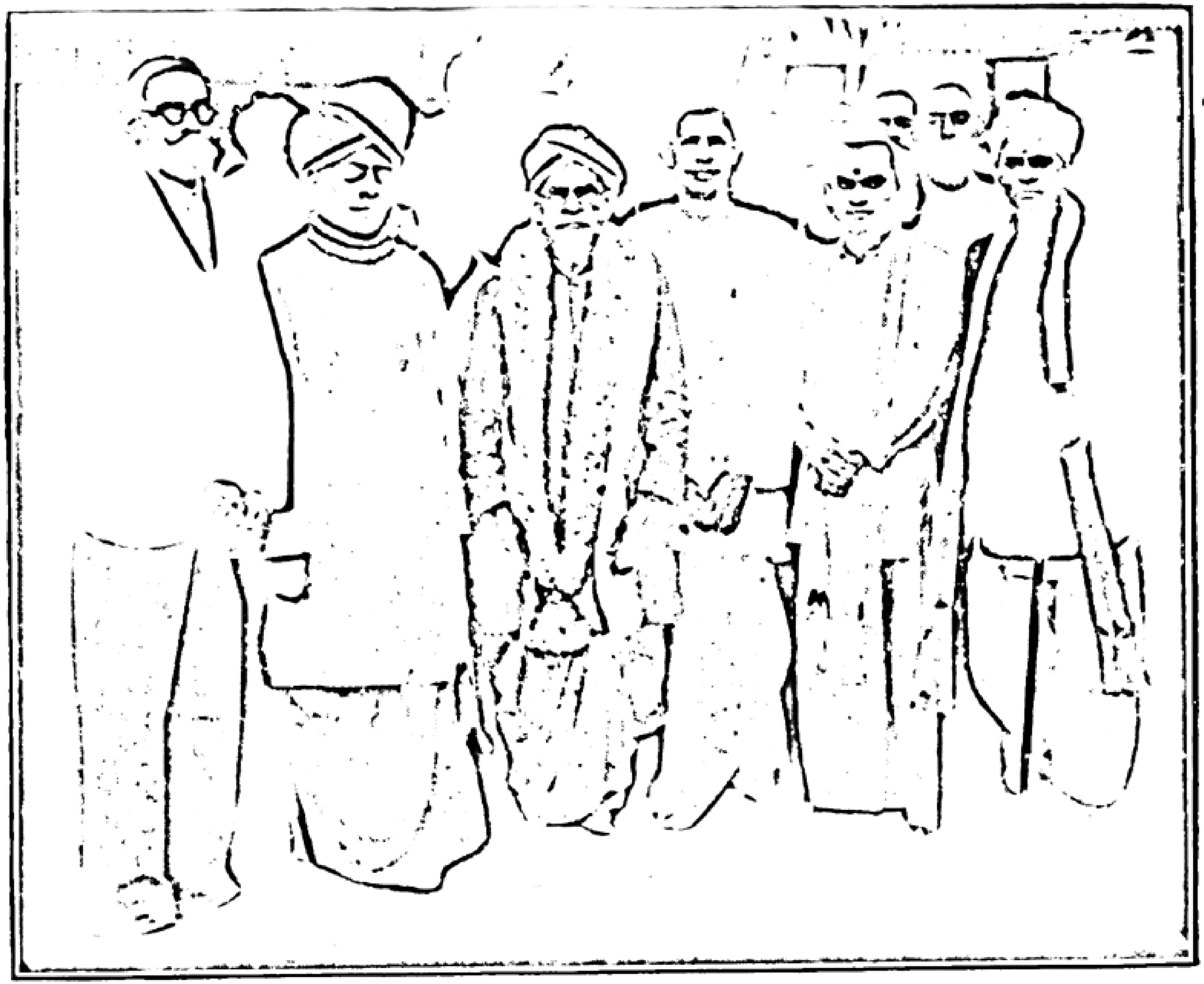


A Reception given to Sri T. Lakshmana Pillai at Annamalai Nagar.

DEDICATED

WITH PERMISSION

TO

DEWAN BAHADUR

RAJAH

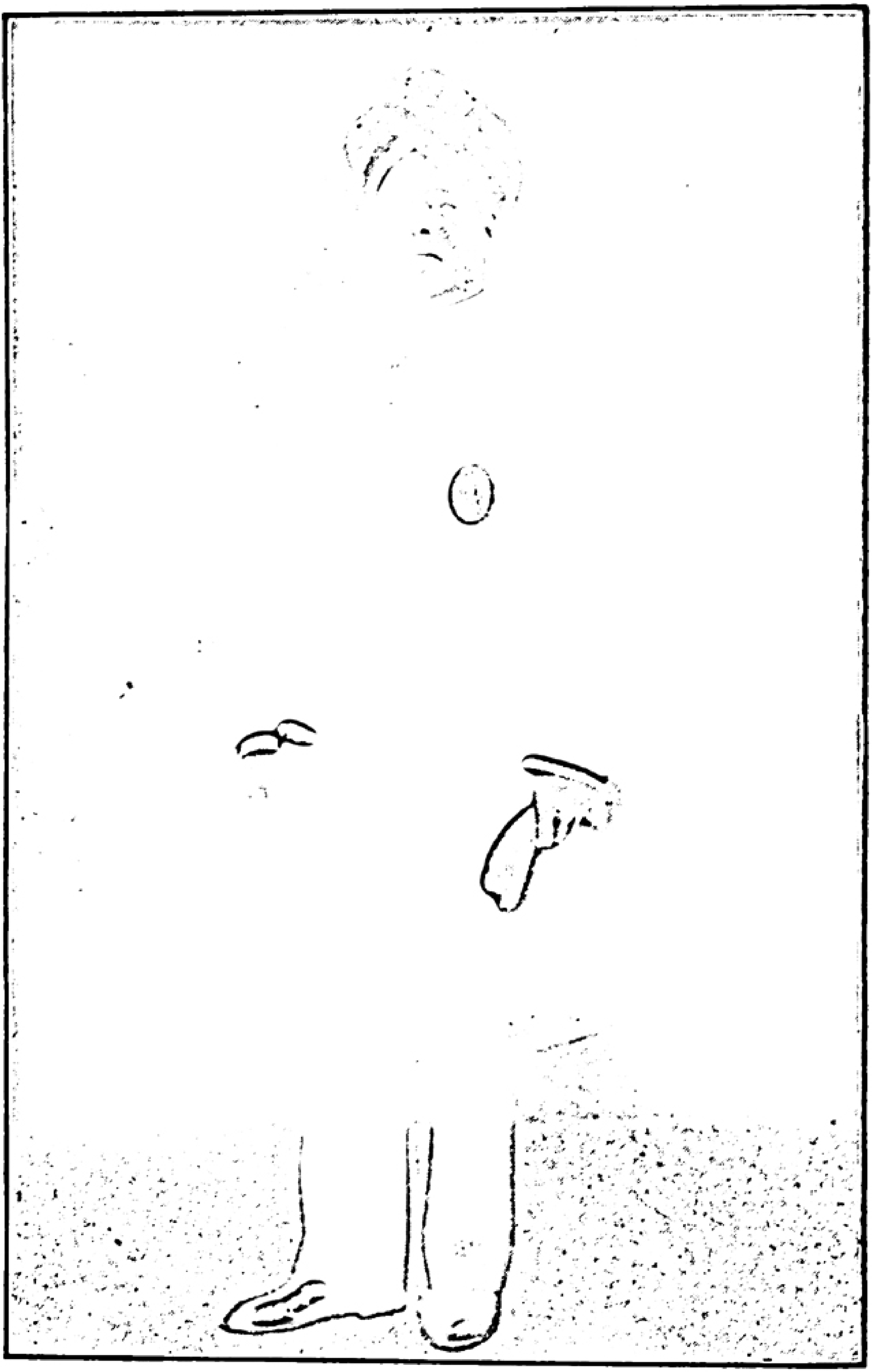
SIR. S. Rm. M. ANNAMALAI CHETTIYAR

AVERGAL OF CHETTINAD

LL. D

Sri T. Lakshmana Pillai and his Biographer.

Sri M. S. Ramaswami Aiyar.



Dr. Rajah Sir Annamalai Chettiyar of Chettinad.

LAKSHMANA PILLAI

A BIOGRAPHY

CHAPTER I

PARENTAGE AND EARLY LIFE

LAKSHMANA of Ramayana fame and Lakshmana, the subject of this biography, trace their respective lineages, alike from Surya.

For, while the former descended from *Surya* Vamsa, the latter descended from one *Surya-Narayana Pillai* on the father's side and from one Yogiswara on the mother's side.

Suryanarayana Pillai belonged to a highly respected Saiva-Vellala family of *Sthanadhipatis* of the ancient and famous shrine of Thiruchendur, which is washed by the eastern sea, situated about 38 miles off to the south-east of Tinnevelly and is an important place of pilgrimage even today. The family-house, which the last owner Rama Pillai sold to a stranger, may be seen even now to be situated in the Car street, near the present Post Office.

of that place. Again, the fact that the family-deity was Goddess Viralakshmi of Kulasekharapatnam, four miles from Thiruchendur, indicates that the original stock must have migrated from that place, hallowed by the name of the celebrated poet-saint, Kumaraguruparaswami.*

From what may be gathered from *a Neet* now at Aloor in South Travancore, Suryanarayana Pillai's three sons migrated from Palamcottah, at which their father had settled himself, to Trivandrum about 1770 A.D., each to seek his fortune there. But, soon, the second son died; the third preferred a clerk's place, under the then minister, Raja Kesava Das; while the first, Muthukumaraswami Pillai by name, moved further north to Alleppey, settled there, and laid the foundation for the future prosperity of his family. For, while his son, Thiravyam Pillai I, flourished at Alleppey as a Timber Merchant, and later on, as the Superintendent of the Commercial office, his grandson Muthukumaraswami Pillai II did indeed a very grand thing, *viz.*, begetting Thiravyam Pillai II, the father of our hero.

*This poet-saint came of the same Saiva Vellala Community as the poet-saints Tayumanavar, Appar and Ramalingam.

This Thiravyam Pillai II who lived from 1827 to 1890, was a highly intelligent, learned, and pious man. He was tender-hearted, though at times irritable; and sympathetic, though at times stubborn. Early in his life, he got the position of an Accountant of the Commercial office at Alleppey. Having filled with credit a few other posts, such as, Huzur Treasury Accountant and Huzur Maramut Samprathy, he finally rose to be the Accountant General of the Government of Travancore.

The then Maharaja of Travancore, H. H. Visakam Thirunal, entertained a high opinion of his capacity; and the then Dewan, Sir A. Seshiah Sastri, wrote about him, on August 13, 1877, as follows.—"No other officer has such an intimate acquaintance with the various and complicated matters of the Revenue Department as Mr. Thiravyam Pillai. He has been of the utmost aid to me in the arrangement of the finances every year; and much of the success therein is surely due to him."

The relation between the Dewan and the Accountant General was not merely official, but also social and even literary, which the following incident pointed to.

Having celebrated at Tinnevelly the marriage of his son Muthukumaraswami Pillai, Mr. Thiravyam Pillai conducted at Trivandrum, on a large scale, the *Maruveedu* Ceremony. Dewan Seshiah Sastri was present on the occasion, when a good nautch went on. All on a sudden Mr. Thiravyam Pillai ran into the house, stopped the noise made by some children there and returned. The Dewan who was watching this, remarked :—

"Mr. Pillai, have you forgotten the famous couplet of the *Kural* :—

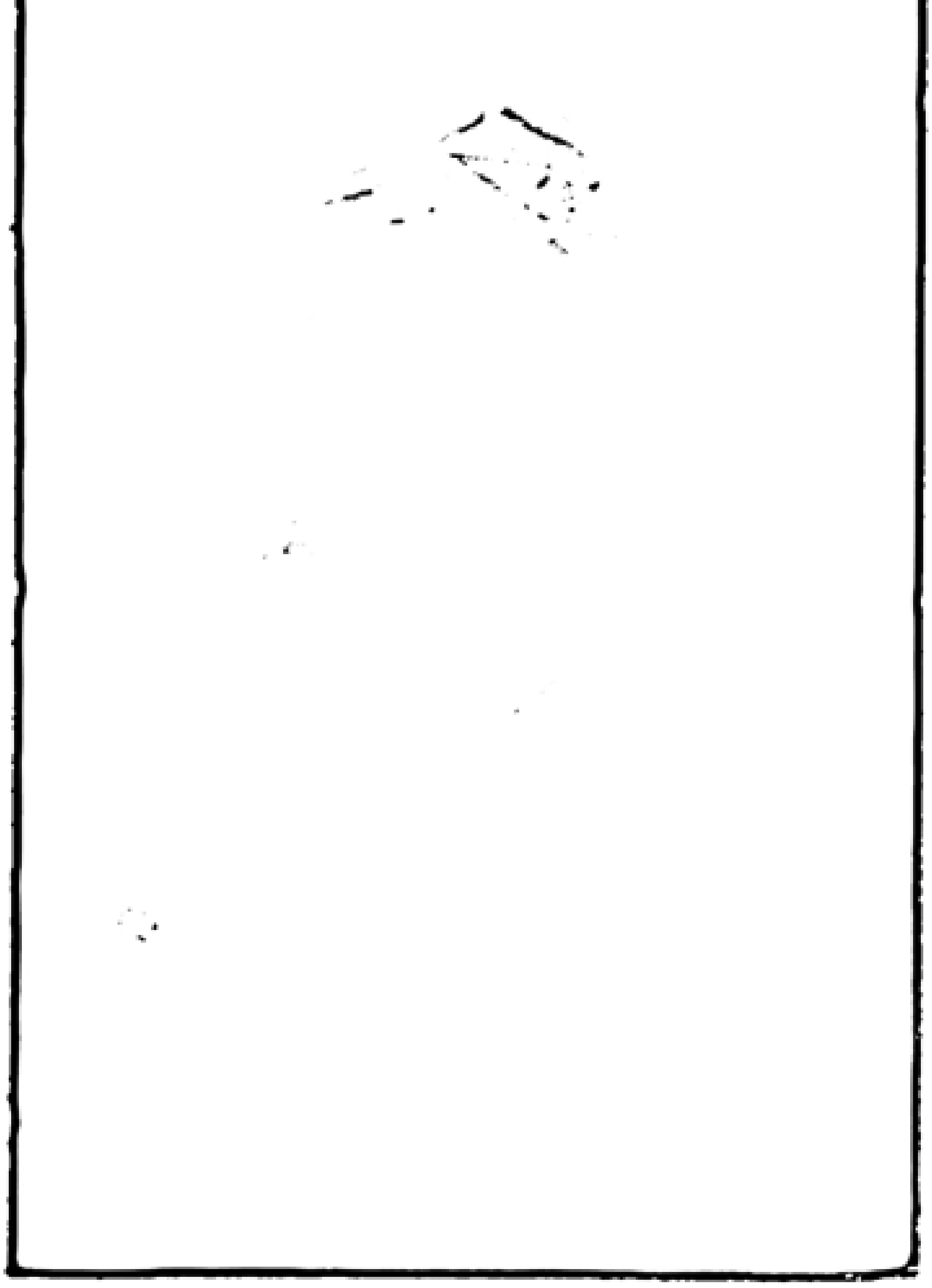
" குழலினி தியாழினி தென்ப தம்மக்கள்
மழலைச்சொற் கேளாதவர். "

Was not the children's noise the மழலைச்சொல் referred to by Valluvar? Was it not sweeter than this dancing girl's music? Why, then, did you hush those little ones into silence?"

Rising to the occasion, Mr. Thiravyam Pillai replied; "Sir, I am reminded of another couplet of the same Kural :—

கற்கக் கசடறக் கற்பவை கற்றபின்
நிற்க வதற்குத் தக.

I now realise that the first part of this couplet alone is applicable to me, for I had thoroughly studied the *Kural*; but not its second part, for



Brother
T. Muthukumaraswami Pillai

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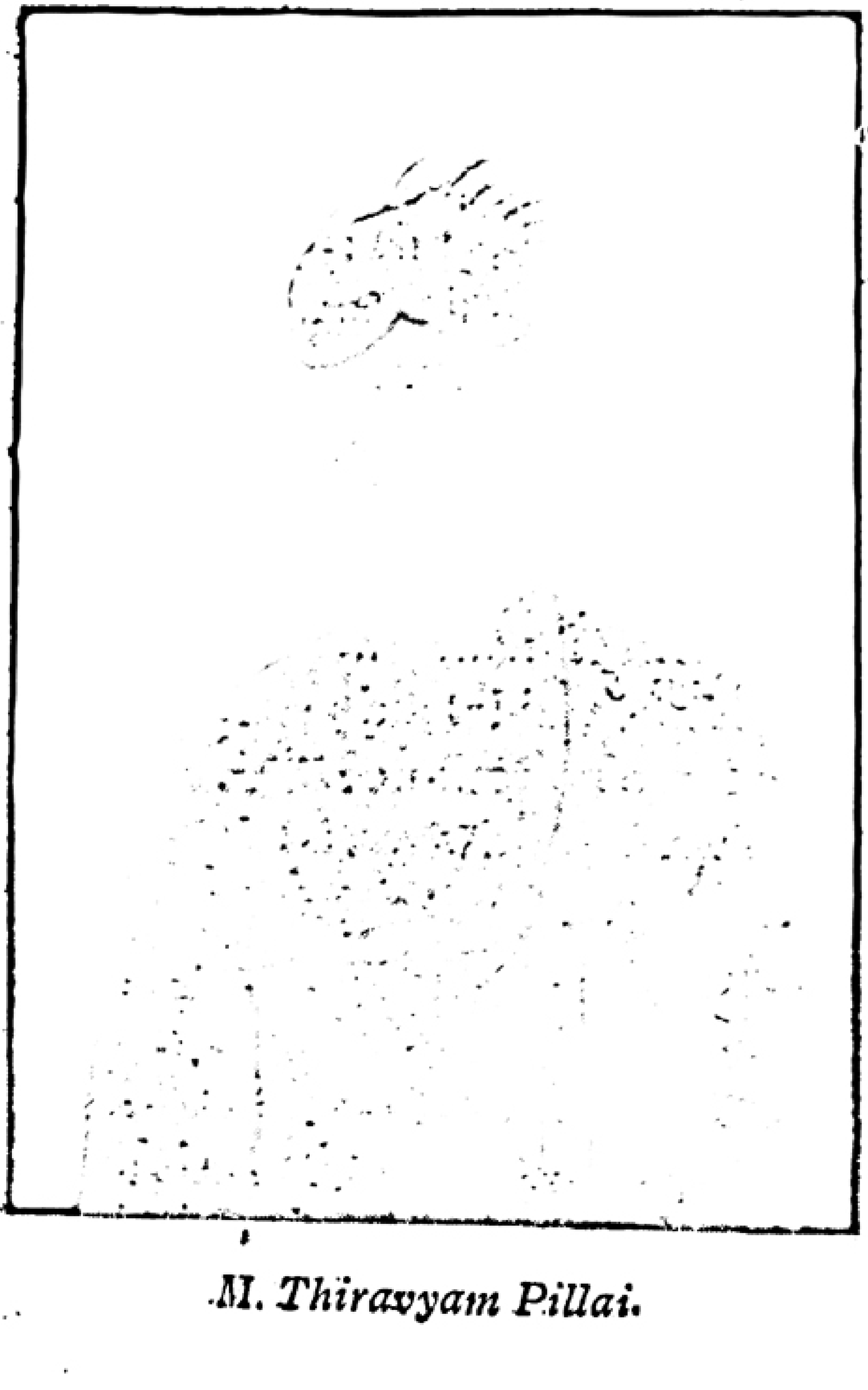
T. Lakshmana Pillai

To face Page 5



M. Thiravyam Pillai.

I did not act up to it, as in the present case. I further realise that both the parts of the couplet apply eminently to you."

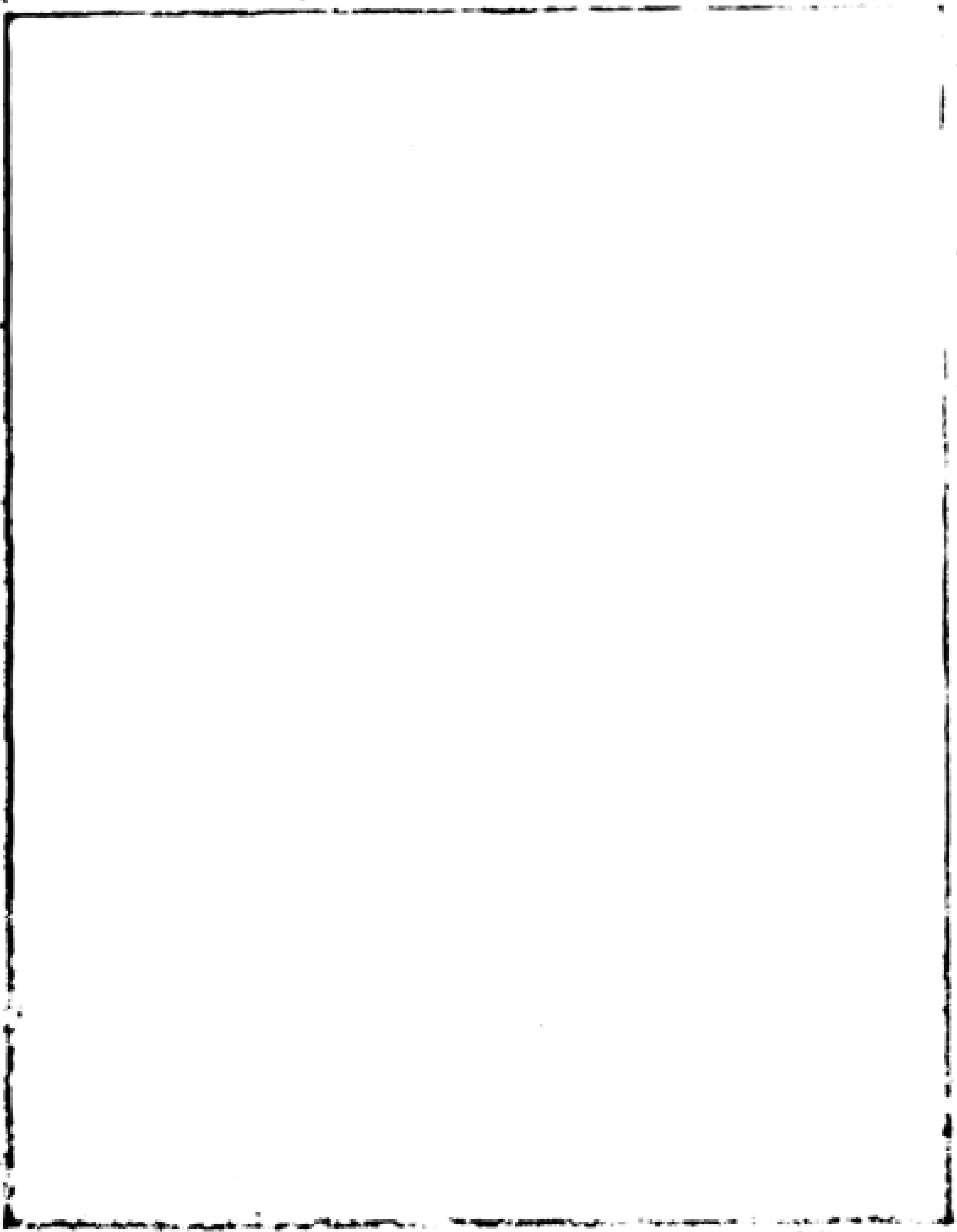
Muthukumaraswami Pillai, in connection with whose marriage the above incident took place, was the first son of Mr. Thiravyam Pillai. He was a brilliant and reputed scholar of versatile talents, who successively filled the posts of Professor of Philosophy in the Maharaja's College, Trivandrum, Tutor to Prince Aswati Thirunal, and Division Assistant and First Class Magistrate. He lived from 1856 to 1897.

The next child of Mr. Thiravyam Pillai was a daughter, named Meenakshi, whom he loved very dearly; but, as fate would have it, the beloved daughter died at the age of three. Such was the grief of her father that he left the house where the death occurred and retired to the Subramonya Swami Temple, Puthenchanthai Street, where he lived like a recluse.

A few months hence, that is to say, on May 3, 1864, the third and last child, named Lakshmana Pillai, (the subject of our biography), was born to him; and the news of his birth brought the father to mirth again and made him, ere

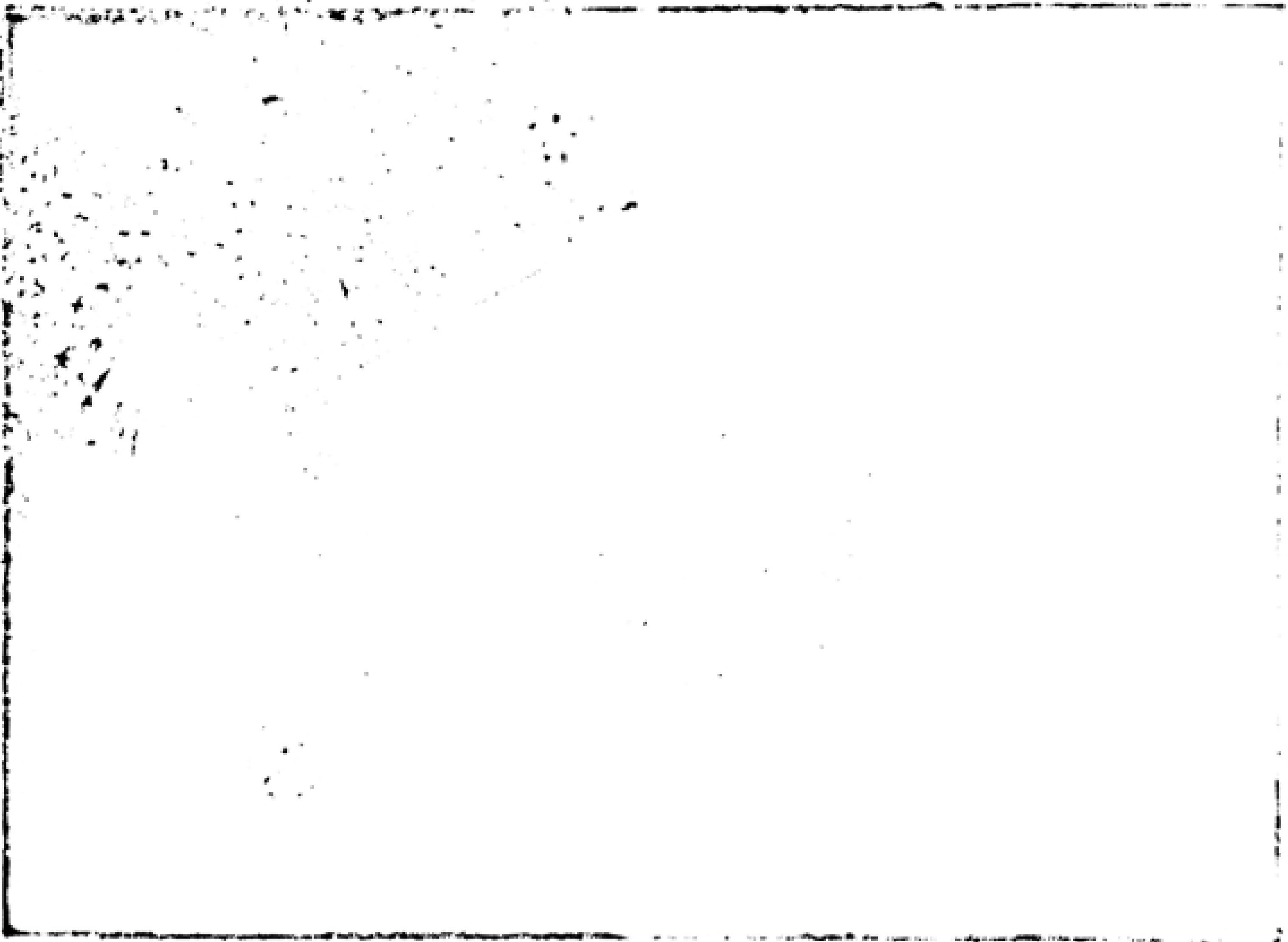
long, forget his daughter's end. Further, the fact that the star of the third child's birth coincided with that of his grand father's death caused Mr. Thiravyam Pillai to believe that the new born was his own father reincarnate. Mr. Thiravyam Pillai used to say in this connection:—"I was unfortunately away when my father died. I was afterwards told that my father called for me many a time, but died without seeing me. Hence he is now born as my son, (referring to Lakshmana Pillai), in order to wipe away his former disappointment. Hence Lakshmana Pillai was known by the pet name of *Pettar* (parent). There was again his mother's testimony to the singular fact that the child was born in a bag full of ashes, which was taken to signify that it would grow up to be a pious and God-fearing man. Its left eye, shut at birth, had to be forced open; and the weakness of it lasted throughout life.

On the mother's side, Lakshmana Pillai was Travancorean to the core. For, his mother, Balarama Valli Ammal, belonged to Kuttemperur near Mavelikarai. She too came of a respectable Saiva Vellala family. Her father, Lakshmana Pillai, was also Accountant General



Mother
Balarama Valli Ammal

To face Page 6



Birth—Place

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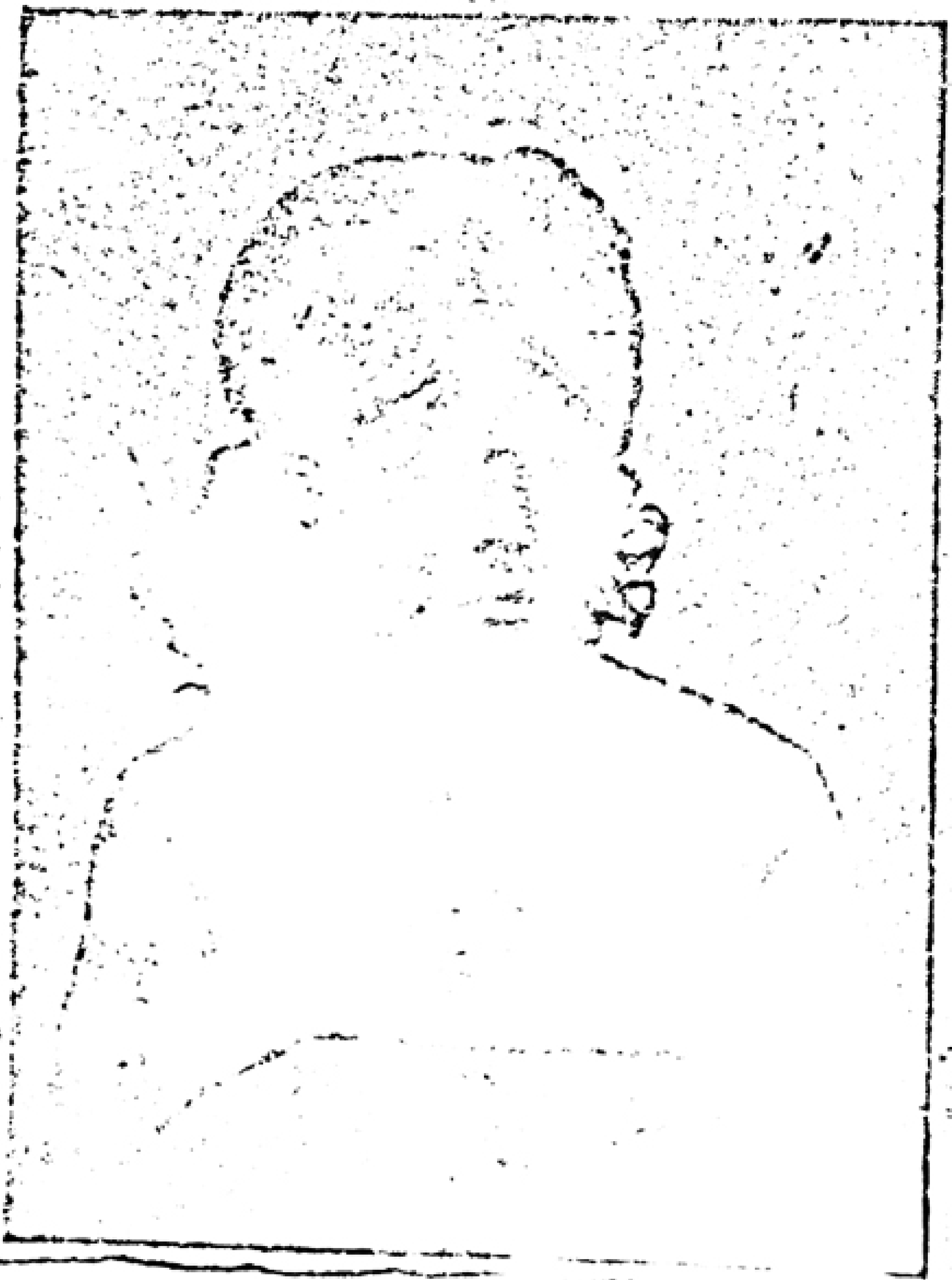
Srimati
Devaki Amma
(1876 to 1932)

To face Page 31



"A Dashing Youth of about 28 years old."

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of the Government of Travancore; and, again, her own mother's grand father Raman Pillai, was another Accountant General.

Thus, on either side, Lakshmana Pillai belonged to the family of Accountant Generals.

The Trivandrum Chalai House where our hero was born, has been recently pulled down, and on its site, Mr. Souriperumal Pillai, a relation of his, has constructed a big bungalow. See with what endearment Lakshmana Pillai apostrophised the house of his birth.

"Dear house! within whose walls my earliest beam
Of light I drew, in which, enchanted, many a dream
Of childhood I did feel, and many days,
O! happy days, unknown to care, did trace
The purest heavenly bliss in all I saw,
Thou standest! From thy present state, I draw
A picture of my past, with gayest tints
Of long lo*t joys, and love which ever prints
Sweet images of light, which dim do grow
In mem'ry's page, through time's unceasing flow.
Fondly doth fancy dwell on things but small,
Which yet do pleasing scenes to view recall.
The yard, the granite wall, the moss-grown tank,
The mongoose-roving backyard on its bank,
The spacious kitchen, are the very same.
'Twas in thy little hall I first did name
The Holy One, Natesa, and did learn

To lisp and sing and play and thus return,—
Of household duties these fell to my share,—
My father's kindness and my mother's care."

At five, the child was sent to a Tamil pyal school and committed to the care of Arumukha Vadyar, of whom he wrote :—

"A teacher in a pyal school, hard by,
Whose faults were poverty and poetry,
Taught me letters; a huge and stately man,
Whose frowns accomplished more than cane e'er can.
Bedaubed with holy ashes, first he sat
To pray, then taught, at intervals of chat.
Nannool he knew by rote and Nikandu;
He was no poet that knew not these two.
He wrote a charming hand which men admired:
Good writing was then owned and never hired.
New Moon and Full Moon were then holidays,
And days adjoining; without them the case
Went with the teacher hard; he must forego
The gifts which half his earnings made below.
Oil was brought to him and pleasant fruits,
And vegetable leaves and rice and roots;
Which he accepted from his boys with cheer.
For these were what stamped metals could procure.
He had no thirst for money past control,
For earthly bliss alone was not his goal.
When pressed for money, he would sit and pray;
For, making money was not found, he'd say,

Taught in the tales he read, or poet's lay;
And 'tis mysterious how he sent away
All his creditors, who were not a few,
Nor considerate, and ne'er pity knew.
For, who to Learning leans a kindly look,
Learning with modesty? Nor man nor book
Seems worthy, when proud Mammon doth men lead.
Power doth wealth, hot pride doth power succeed.
The soul that scoffs not at meek Learning, clad
In rags, on earth is rarely to be had.
So passed that teacher to his humble grave,
Taking less from the world than what he gave,
Fixing his thoughts on books and light and God,
Seeking for all his labour Heav'n's reward."

Mr. Thiravyam Pillai, like Rama Brahmam, took upon himself the task of moulding his son's character, made his boy repeat some hymns from the *Thevaram* every morning in music, and himself narrated to the child stories about the three great hymnists,— Sambandar, Appar, and Sundarar,— and drew its attention to their respective pictures.

Once the boy caught hold of an insect (தட்டாரப்பூச்சி), caused it to lift a stone, and finally stripped it of its wings. The father, who happened to witness it, at once sounded a note of warning:— "My boy, it is cruel and sinful to

tease an insect like this. How would you feel, if I were to tease you in a similar way?" This incident, small as it was, Lakshmana Pillai chose to record, in his *Early Reminiscences*, thus:—

"When, in my ignorance, I'gan to tease
Creature aught living, he would warn me: 'Cease,
For that is as much dear to God as thou.'
Compassion thus he taught for bird on bough
And helpless man and beast; for kindness, aye,
Man's kindness is, of God's pure grace, a ray."

As an orthodox Saivite that he was, the father strictly prohibited the child from taking any kind of eatables from non-vegetarians. Once the boy ate Pittu from a non-vegetarian, went home and—in his qualm of conscience,—confessed the fact to his father, who pardoned him, patted him, and warned him not to do so in future. Lest the father's orthodoxy should be mistaken for fanaticism, Lakshmana Pillai wrote about his father:—

"A staunch Saivite he was, but hated not
Extraneous creeds; for, after all, he thought
They were but diverse ways of reaching God,
And none should chafe because his neighbour trod

A diff'rent way; devotion was indeed
The greatest need, whatever be the creed.
In this devotion he stood high, and taught
The same to those that from him knowledge sought."

At 6, a goldsmith kidnapped the boy, evidently for the gold bangles he wore. Missing his pet son at the usual meal time, the father ran in search of him, inquired from house to house, questioned every passer-by and asked every bazaar-man for his whereabouts. Fortunately, a faithful servant of his, Iyappan by name, got a clue from a bazaar-man that the boy was seen going eastward along the Chalai-Bazaar road with a goldsmith. At once Mr. Thiravyam Pillai and Iyappan entered into every goldsmith's house along the road and found the boy in one, where the roguish goldsmith was seen in the act of removing the gold bangles from the boy's wrists. Iyappan gave the goldsmith a sound thrashing; and the boy was taken safely home along with the bangles. By a sort of misdirected magnanimity, the father neglected to bring the goldsmith to book.

At 7, the boy who suffered from fever, fell into a delirium one night; and the

very doctor, Mantramoorty, doubted if he could survive that night. Piously did the father sit by his child's bed and, with tears in his eyes, vowed a *Kavadi—Prartana* to be fulfilled at Tiruchendur. When, a few hours hence, the boy got up, (as if from sleep), muttering *Velayudha*, the joy of the father knew no bounds. Soon the boy was taken to Tiruchendur where, with a *Kavadi* on his shoulders, he sang,—as he was required to,—a few Thevaram hymns so charmingly that the listeners desired the father to give him a special training in music.

On his return to Trivandrum, Mr. Thiravyam Pillai did engage one Pappu Pillai to teach his musically inclined boy the finest of the fine arts. Only for six months Pappu Pillai taught the boy music and was then succeeded by his brother, Velu Pillai; yet, he produced such a deep impression in the mind of his pupil that, 59 years hence, the latter thought it worth his while to pay him the following glowing tribute:—

"Mr. Pappu Pillai of Parur, who was my first teacher in music, was a Nair and a Bhagavatar by profession. He commanded

an agreeable and, at the same time, impressive voice which, by training and exercise, had become admirably adapted for the singing of Swaras and Pallavis. The songs that he sang were almost all of local origin. He was a terror to most of his contemporary Bhagavatars; for, if any one dared to set himself against him as a rival, he would take up his favourite Pallavi,—

உப்பரைக்காசு, புளியரைக்காசு, மிளகரைக்காசு,
கடுகரைக்காசு, நாலரை இரண்டுகாசு,— and by singing it adroitly in three Kalas, would quickly throw his opponent into such confusion, (by the complexity of its phraseology, if not by the brilliance of its melody), that nothing but immediate submission would save him from ignominy and humiliation. This *Pallavi*, however, was the last weapon in his armoury, and he would not resort to it except under extreme necessity. The Malayalam and Sanskrit compositions of Swati Tirunal as well as Jayadeva's *Ashtapadis* were familiar to him; and these formed the stock music of his day, barring, of course, Pallavis and Swaras."

Velu Pillai continued the tuition. One Ayya Bhagavatar was also engaged to teach

the boy *Vina.*

About this time, two great men paid their visits to Mr. Thiravyam Pillai and exhibited their proficiency, each in his own art, *viz.*, the renowned Maha Vythinathier and the famous Muruga Dasar. The former's divine music deepened the boy's taste for *music*; while the latter's wonderful recitation of his own verses, (composed on the model of Arunagiri), refined his taste for *Tamil.*

At about 10, Lakshmana Pillai was sent to an English School near the District Court buildings at Puthenchandai; two years later (i.e. in 1876), the school was removed to the new College buildings at the Cantonment, and one Harihara Iyer was engaged as his English Tutor. With five years of strenuous study, he was able to get through the Matriculation Examination of 1879.

This success was regarded even by Mr, Thiravyam Pillai as *a feat*, taking into consideration the various other activities to which Lakshmana Pillai was subjected, and which took away not an inconsiderable portion of his time.

During every vacation, the boy used to be

sent to Alleppey, where his paternal aunt, Chinnathayi, lived. This Chinnathayi happened to be a childless widow and lavished all her affection on our Lakshmana. Being intelligent, learned, and deeply religious like her own brother, she used to recite the stories of the *Mahabharata* for the benefit of her pet nephew, and insisted on his spending the whole vacation in the study of religious books. On the boy's return to school, the father Mr. Thiravyam Pillai would not fail to instil into his growing mind ethical and humanitarian lessons.

One such lesson the grateful son chose to record thus:—

"Once my father explained the *Kural*:—

மறந்தும் பிறன்கேடு சூழற்க சூழின்
அறஞ்சூழும் சூழ்ந்தவன் கேடு—

in so much detail and with such apt illustrations, that it made an indelible impression on me, which lasted for life. O! if such instruction were imparted to every boy and girl at an impressionable age, how much of the wanton injuries inflicted in the world would have been avoided."

Further, there was the music-tuition which Mr. Thiravyam Pillai himself felt to be taking

away an unduly large portion of his son's time.*

Over and above all, the boy Lakshmana, quite like the boy Thiagaraja, would of his own accord steal an hour or two from the rigid time-table imposed on him both at home and in the school, and listen with rapt attention to the *Vina*-play of Sattu Bhagavatar, and was so impressed therewith that he chose to record of the Bhagavatar later on thus:—

"Sattu Bhagavatar was a Brahmin of Suchindram, of fair complexion, handsome appearance and quiet ways. He was a Court musician of the Trivandrum Palace, with a pay of Rs. 12, (which was equal to Rs. 25 of the present day), and with sundry other benefactions, he lived a simple life. Once when a pupil of his, after regular training under him on the *Vina* for three or four years, brought him a remuneration of Rs. 400, he, with a noble self-denial, declined to receive it, and observed: "I know your father is not a well-to-do man and cannot really afford to part with this sum; take

* Nevertheless, the father did not stop the son's music tuition. On the other hand, he became more and more fond of the boy because of his music, and would at times refer to him jocularly thus:- அந்தப் பாட்டுக்காரப் பயலைக் கூப்பிடு.

it back." He, however, took *one Rupee** as a *Guru Dakshina* in a truly religious spirit. He used to play on the *Vina*, 3 or 4 times a day, at fixed hours; and his playing was very sweet, especially when he elaborated Ragas. He disliked too much speed, artificiality and excitement, and felt them all to be so many disturbing elements in the creation and maintenance of the right feeling. He was the founder of a style, if not a school, of *Vina*-playing and had several followers and imitators. He lived to the grand old age of 85.

To this Sattu Bhagavatar's house, which was close by, the boy Lakshmana would go and listen to his Vina-play. Occasionally he heard other musicians also who came there and sang, such as, Raghupati Bhagavatar, Vadaseri Rama Bhagavatar, Appancoil Subbiah Bhagavatar, and Mahadeva Bhagavatar.

If, in spite of these various activities, the boy Lakshmana got through his Matriculation Examination, what wonder is there that his father regarded his son's success as a *feat*?

* Early in August 1940, during his stay in Madras with me (Biographer), Sri T. Lakshmana Pillai followed his Guru's example and accepted only *one Rupee* from Srimati C. Saraswati Bai (who was then taking lessons from him) when she offered him more.

During Lakshmana's F.A. course, a curious incident took place, to which Mr. Thiravyam Pillai, in the plenitude of his wisdom, gave a happy turn and obviated what might, in the hands of an imprudent father, have proved otherwise.

Seeing that a decent Bangalow had been erected for the exclusive use of his elder brother, Lakshmana asked his father to get a separate hall built for his own study. The father at once replied, " Why do you ask for a hall, when I was content in my younger days with a small thatched room?" Sharply did the boy retort: " Your father was an humble Accountant in the Commercial Office; while my father enjoys the proud privilege of being the Accountant General of the Government of Travancore."

With laughter, the father rolled; and soon a hall was erected for the use of Lakshmana at a cost of Rs. 800. All was well that ended well.

In 1882, Lakshmana passed his F.A. and took his B.A. Degree, two years hence.

Taking a retrospect of his College career, Sri Lakshmana Pillai observed: " My aim had

never been to attain brilliancy as a College student; while my brother headed the list in the F.A. and B.A. Examinations and carried off prizes in several subjects. The reason for this difference is that my brother was not, like me, encumbered with the study of such a special art as music. To rival my brother in English scholarship was a hopeless thing for any student in Travancore then. Even if I had tried, I feel I could not have achieved the distinction in English that he did. My thoughts, on the other hand, turned towards Tamil, which I began to passionately love from my childhood. I resolved accordingly to work for Tamil.

When, scandalised at the quarrel between Orlando and his brother, in the first scene of Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, Sir Walter Scott screamed out: "A'n't they *brothers*?"; surely, the Scottish Poet should have had, in his mind, such loving brothers as Muthukumaraswami Pillai and Lakshmana Pillai.

CHAPTER II

PROBATION PERIOD

During the period between 1885 and 1892, Sri Lakshmana Pillai acquired, unconsciously though, the necessary equipment, incentive, and driving force, wherewith to play his part in future as Tamil Poet and Music-Composer, as well as the Organiser of the Travancore Humanitarian Society. Hence this period may be called his *Probation Period.*

The reader will, I trust, find it of advantage to have this *Period* split into five parts—*official*, *domestic*, *literary*, *musical*, and *humanitarian*,—and describe Sri Lakshmana Pillai's life under those five heads.

(1) Official

Very soon after he took his B. A. Degree, Sri Lakshmana Pillai joined the Law College at

Trivandrum and got, about the same time, employed as an attache in the local English Office on a pay of Rs. 20 per mensem. The elated youth was building castles in the air and fancied himself now as a Lawyer, and now as a Judge. But, like Fate, Dewan Ramiengar chose to mould his destinies otherwise.

In March 1886, Sri Lakshmana Pillai found himself, along with Mr. A. Hoogwerf, under orders, at Madras as an attache on deputation to study the British System of Accounts. Evidently the Dewan's intentions were *bona fide*; for, he wanted to bring Pillai in the wake of his father, for whom he had a high regard and to enable the promising young man to enjoy the same prosperous life-voyage. But he did not long remain in office and was succeeded by other Dewans, whose sense of *fair-play*, like that of English Chancellors, varied, as we shall see, with the length of their toes.

At the outset of his official career at Madras, Sri Lakshmana Pillai happened to meet an Ex-Dewan of Travancore, Raja Sir. T. Madhava Rao at Mylapore, by whom the following piece of advice was given to him:—

"Follow the foot-steps of your father, Mr. Thiravyam Pillai. Remember that *Sircar Service* is like seeing a Juggler's game in the public street. You see rows of men standing near the juggler and every man wanting to get a clearer sight of what is going on, by getting to the front rows. It is natural that you will also want to get into the front row. Do so by all means. But in so doing, do not elbow your neighbour, lest others should elbow you from your place. What you ought to do is to stand and wait. When a man in the row in front of you has witnessed the scene and gone, get into his place. Similarly, when any one in the next front row vacates his place, get into it, and so on to the foremost place."

These words were admitted by Sri Lakshmana Pillai to have sunk deep into his heart and formed the Gospel-test of his official career. It appears to me, however, that the rising man entertained a child-like faith in the Ex-Dewan's *out-of-date* advice and waited without elbowing for an unduly long time, only to learn at last that the *Jugglers game* was otherwise than what it had been represented to be. None in the front row was ever inclined to clear out

and make way for one in the rear rank. If, by chance, any one in front rank went out, some unknown X, from even the rearmost rank, was dropped from high to fill up the gap.

Be that as it might, Sri Lakshmana Pillai's training in Accounts at Madras lasted for five months from March to July of 1886, after which he returned to Trivandrum as the Auditor, Jamabandy Department, on Rs. 35 per mensem.

The following table sums up his official career during the period under consideration:—

No.	Date	Nature of the post	Place	Pay	Allowance
1	Dec. 1885	Attache Huzur English Office	Trivandrum	20	
2	March 1886	Attache on Deputation to study Accounts	Madras	20	30
3.	July 1886	Auditor, Jamabandy Dept.	Trivandrum	35	
4	Nov. 1889	Deputy Clerk, Maramat English Office	Do.	45	
5	Nov. 1890	Acting Mint Superintendent	Do.	45	12
6	March 1891	Acting Government Press Superintendent	Do.	100	
7	July 1891	Reversion to Post No. 4	Do.	45	
8	Aug. 1892	Head Clerk, Commercial Office	Do.	60	

It further shows that Sri Lakshmana Pillai got his official promotions one after another in

regular succession and not by sudden leaps. Posts Nos. 4 and 5 gave Pillai comparatively light work. But Post No. 6 gave him sufficiently hard work to do. As Acting Mint Superintendent, he was able to show a remarkably low sum as wastage in silver, it being only between 10 and 30 rupees on a quantity of silver bullions weighing 10,000 tolas, as against the wastage of 50 to 200 rupees on the same quantity, prior to his time. This notably great reduction attracted the attention of the then Dewan Rama Row, who, being struck with the scrupulous honesty of the rising officer, showed his appreciation in a tangible manner by appointing him as Acting Government Press Superintendent on Rs. 100 per mensem in 1891. In four months' time, however, Sri Lakshmana Pillai had to revert to his original post No. 4, from which he was sent on promotion to Alleppey, in August 1892, to Post No. 8 on Rs. 60 per mensem.

The circumstances under which he was transferred to Alleppey were rather curious; and Sri Lakshmana Pillai recorded them as follows:—

"Soon after his appointment, the Maramat

Engineer found the work of the Maramat English Office to have fallen in arrears for several years. Under such circumstances, he ought to have employed a special staff to clear off the arrears. But he desired to make it appear to the Government that he could, if he would, clear off the arrears without any extra cost, and also to take the credit for doing so. He therefore *overworked* his present staff and insisted that they should work from early morning till late in the night on all the days of the week,—even on the festival and gazetted holidays. Obey all the clerks did, despite the oppressiveness of the order.

On one festive gazetted holiday, however, Sri Lakshmana Pillai went home at 3. P. M. The Engineer who entered the office that day after 3. P. M, learnt that Sri Lakshmana Pillai alone, of all the clerks, had left the office at 3. P. M. On the morning of the next day, the Engineer and Pillai met; and the following passage of words between them will, I trust, serve as an eye-opener to many a similar office:—

Engineer:—Why did you go away from the office at 3. P. M. yesterday?

Pillai:—I finished the whole of yesterday's work, allotted to me, before 3. P. M; and, instead of rotting in the office with no work, I went away.

E:—With whose permission did you leave the office?

P:—With the Head Clerk's.

E:— Why so?

P—Because you were not present in the office at 3. P. M.

E:—Why should you not have waited for me?

P:—What certainty was there that you would ever go to the office yesterday? Further, may not some consideration be shown to the clerks who work on holidays?

E:—Am I to consult your convenience?

P:—Yes, Sir, on a holiday, not on other days.

E:—Will you write down what you said?

P:—Yes, I am prepared to do so.

Though dissuaded by the other clerks, Sri Lakshmana Pillai wrote down what he said and delivered it to the enraged engineer. The latter

forthwith rushed to the Dewan, who patiently heard the case, but dismissed it as being silly.

Though vanquished, the engineer could argue still, and he exclaimed to the Dewan: "This case of gross insubordination will, if left unpunished, operate as a bad example to the other clerks of the office." This argument of *red-tapism* appeared to mislead even the fair minded Dewan. Fortunately, however, Sri Lakshmana Pillai went in time to the Dewan and delivered before him a round, unvarnished tale of the whole affair so admirably, that the good Dewan sympathised with him for his innocence and, tearing him from the iron grip of the Engineer, sent him away to Alleppey on promotion. Further, this incident led to a general circular being issued that the clerks should not be compelled to work on holidays.

(2) *Domestic*

Be it noted that, even during his B. A. course, Sri Lakshmana Pillai had been married and had become, in five years, the father of three children (two daughters and a son), named in

the order of their birth,—Balaramavalli, Virakumar, and Alagammal and that, when he went to Madras in 1886, it was not without a pang that he parted company from his first-born daughter, who was then three months old.

Is it possible for such a loving father to look down upon his marriage that took place on July 4, 1884 and that gave him these beloved children, with contempt and aversion and to characterise it as a "loveless marriage." Even the most intimate biographer of Sri Lakshmana Piliai, that I claim myself to be, will feel it most delicate to enter upon such a *loveless* side of his life. I shall therefore let Pillai himself speak about it.

"At 20, I was in the Senior B. A. Class, and when there were yet only six months for the examination, I was precipitated into a marriage without my consent. I signified my disapproval by merely telling my father that there was no hurry to perform the marriage then. But, taking his stand on the insufficient ground of his own ill-health, my father stubbornly overruled my gently worded objection and proceeded with the marriage-preparation. I feared to press my objection further, lest I

should be thrown out of his protection. The bride selected was Srimathi Vythiappavalli Ammal, a girl of thirteen, daughter of Sri Chempakaraman Pillai, Accountant General, Travancore. I married. I tried to love my wife, but I found that our temperaments did not agree. I put up with the decree of fate. As time rolled on, things went from bad to worse; then, at the end of 1890, they took a sharply serious turn. Even then I waited for full six months in the hope that time would heal and rectify the matter. But O! the estrangement became keener and keener."

The details which led to the *estrangement* that grew into a deadlock, and which Pillai recorded in his diary with Boswellian simplicity,—I omit for obvious reasons. In any case, Sri Pillai seems to have laboured under some keen incompatibility of temperament between himself and his wife. He thought that the whole situation was due to the system of marriage in vogue, which afforded no opportunity for the bride and bridegroom to meet and study each other's temperament, wherein agreement was left to chance and not to the choice of the parties. As a victim to the system, he felt it right to seek a remedy for it.

To make the matter worse, just when the above-mentioned *estrangement* became keenest, Pillai's father died, leaving the family a decree-debt of Rs. 700. Living, then, at Trivandrum within the reach of the creditors' claws; mortified by owning some Manamari lands, the yield where-of was most precarious; humiliated in the office by unsympathetic and even revengeful superiors; disappointed at the refusal of any help from his uncle or even his own brother; but with a burning desire to prosecute, under any circumstances, his English and Tamil studies and also carry on his musical activities, if only a little domestic happiness were guaranteed to him; what, I ask, would be the tension of Sri Lakshmana Pillai's feelings, whenever that little domestic happiness was denied to him?

Under the circumstances, after the estrangement referred to above, Sri Pillai resolved upon a second marriage, which alone he felt would solve the domestic deadlock. To marry another girl from his own caste would entail a very heavy expenditure, to which he was not financially equal. Very naturally, therefore, his thoughts turned towards an inter-caste alliance; and he married a respectable Nair girl, a fair, and fairly-educated daughter of

a Tahsildar and the grand-daughter of a Peishkar, Srimathi Devaki Amma by name, on Jan. 1, 1892 at Trivandrum.

Be it said to the credit of Mr. Pillai that he made due provision for the maintenance of his first wife.

(3) *Literary.*

Sri Lakshmana Pillai was, as even now he is, a voracious reader. While at Madras in 1886, he saved one-half of his monthly income and utilised it for the purchase of English and Tamil books from the Gujili Bazaar, most of which he at once read through.

On his return to Trivandrum in July 1886, he had with him a set of 200 Volumes, with which he formed the nucleus of a library at Pazhavangadi, which became the centre of resort to some of his friends, viz., Messrs. D. Balasubramonia Pillai (Tamil poet and philosopher), A. Krishnaiyengar (Tamil Pandit), N. Parameswaran Pillai, (author of Malayalam Novels) Subramonia Mudaliar, a bold debater, and P. Ramakrishnan Iyer (son of the famous Parameswara Bhagavathar), and where there were talks and even hot discussions on literary,

social and philosophical topics.

In his craving for more books, Sri Lakshmana Pillai became a member of the People's Library, which was afterwards absorbed into the present Public Library, Trivandrum. All the official posts he held throughout his probation period, except perhaps the Government Press-Superintendant's post, gave him plenty of leisure to pursue his post-graduate studies and graze, at will, the wide pasture of literature that lay before him.

Accordingly, he read the ancient classics of which he was fond, particularly Sophocles, Demosthenes, and Cicero. He further read Shakespeare's *Plays*, Addison's *Essays*, Emerson's *Works*, Valluvar's *Kural*, St. Ramalingom's *Arutpa* and a lot of other books, such as Thevaram, Nalavenba, Kalingathuparani, Paduthurai, Kambar, and Chintamani. Of these, he was over-fond of Emerson's *Works* and St. Ramalingom's *Arutpa*.

He had, however, no settled plan of reading, which was therefore desultory, though wide in its scope. He himself admitted this point and observed that his reading, at this stage of his life, amounted only to "a driving through

a sea of books, like a vessel without pilot or rudder."

Nor was his activity confined only to reading. He sedulously collected a good lot of books bearing especially on Tamil, and even produced a few works himself.

What was the ruling passion of Sri Lakshmana Pillai's life that impelled him to extend his activities beyond his breadwinning work and be absorbed in studies in the intervals of his business.

Early in his life, Tamil literature assumed a place in his mind not merely as a juvenile pastime, but as an occupation of serious import; just as English poetry did in the mind of Milton, or Carnatic Music in the mind of Thiagaraja. Listen to what Pillai himself observed on the point:—

"Of what use is the endeavour to excel in a language only to swell the tide that is already swollen? Does not the fact that I was educated in English and had thus opportunities to observe how that language, which was less developed in Chaucer's time than Tamil was, rose, by dint of the efforts of great authors from time to time, to a position of surpassing

power and eminence, lay an obligation on me to contribute what I can towards the development of the Tamil language? I fear that Tamil has been kept too long in a deplorable condition; and I feel it is the duty of the educated people to work for the development of that language and its literature."

Some such strong passion took possession of Sri Lakshmana Pillai's mind and, like a good guide, friend, and philosopher, kept him on the right track of *Paropakara* and even pulled out his mind, whenever it tended to be dragged down by opposite forces, such as,

> "The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
> The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
> The insolence of office, and the spurns
> That patient merit of the unworthy takes,"

of most of which he had plenty.

Soon after the formation of his private library at Pazhavangadi, Sri Lakshmana Pillai organised a Tamil Society, called *Tamil Payil Sangam*, the object of which was, as the name indicated, to train its members in Tamil, and located that 'Sangam' in his own house. Under its auspices, in March 1889, he delivered a most interesting and instructive lecture on *Tamil*

Moli Valartal, or the ways and means of improving the Tamil language, which elicited the unstinted praise of Sri (now, Maha Mahopadhyaya, Dr.) V. Swaminathier, Prof. P. Sundaram Pillai (subsequently, author of *Manonmaniyam*) and Mathakanda Sastri, (the Demosthenes of Trivandrum).

This lecture reveals a welcome harbinger (in the person of Pillai) of a new, vigorous style of writing Tamil prose, as opposed to the old, conventional one, and contains a very powerful plea for all the Tamilians to advance the cause of their hoary Tamil.

See for example, how nicely Pillai introduced his subject:—

"அன்னம் அன்று பசிகேட்கும்; கல்வி நின்று [ஆத்ம—] பசிகேட்கும். ஊக்கம், ஒற்றுமை, விடாமுயற்சி, பொதுநன்மை நோக்கம், சுதேசாபிமானம், இத்தனையுஞ் சேர்ந்தால், முடியாத பொருள் இவ்வுலகத்திலுண்டோ? இல்லை. பொதுநன்மையிற் சிறந்த தர்மமும் பேறும் உலகத்திலுண்டோ? இல்லை. உலகத்தில் கல்வியின்றிப் பொது நன்மை நாடுவது சாத்தியமோ? இல்லை. கல்வியில் சுயபாஷையில் கல்விகற்கும் பெருமை மற்றெதிலுமுண்டோ? இல்லை."

Look, again, what a beautiful comparison he took, in order to emphasise his point:—

"மறுபாஷை கற்பது, கடலைக் காணப் போவது போல, பார்ப்பதற்கேயன்றி, அநுபவிப்பதற்கல்ல. கடல் வெள்ளம் பார்க்க எத்தனை அழகாயிருந்தாலும், அதன் உப்பு அதைவிட்டு ஒருபோதும் போகாது. எப்போதும் கடற்கரையிலிருக்கலாமென்றாலோ, அதுவும் முடியாது. நாம் உண்டு, உடுத்து, உறங்கி, உற்சாகங்கொள்ள வேண்டுமானால், வீட்டுக்கு வரவேண்டும். நாடு சுற்றியும், திரை கடலோடியும், தேடிய பொருளைக் கொண்டு, பழயபடி உள்ளக் களிப்புடன் வீட்டுக்குத் திரும்புதல்போல், உண்மைத் தேசாபிமானிகள், அந்நிய பாஷைகள் இப்போது எவ்வளவுதான் சிறப்புற்றிருந்தாலும், அதில் எவ்வளவு அறிவாகிய பொருள் அடங்கியிருந்தாலும், அதில் அவர் எவ்வளவு விற்பத்தி அடைந்த நிபுணராயிருந்தாலும், அவ்வறிவையெல்லாங்கொண்டே, தங்கள் சுயபாஷையை முன்னுக்குக் கொண்டு வருபவரேயொழிய, அதைப் பழமை யென்று இகழ்ந்து கைவிடுவா ரல்லர்."

Look, further again, how artistically he referred to a historic parallel, regarding his point:—

"நம்மை இப்போது ஆங்கிலேயர் ஆண்டுவருவது போல், முன் அவர்களையே "நார்மன்ஸ்" என்னும் ஜாதியார் அடக்கி யாண்டு வந்தபோது, அவர் ஆங்கிலேய நாட்டில் 'நார்மன்' பாஷையை நிலை நிறுத் தப்பார்த்தும் முடியாமல், ராஜாங்க பாஷை கூட ஆங்கிலேயமாகத்தான் இருக்கவேண்டு மென்று, ஆங்கிலேய ஜனங்கள் தமது சுதே சாபிமானத்தாலும், ஊக்கத்தாலும், ஒற்று மையாலும், ஒரே பிடியாய்க் கடைப்பிடித்துச் சாதிக்கவில்லையா? முன்னமே நமக்குச் சுய பாஷாபிமானம் இருக்கவேண்டியது போக, நம்மையாளும் பெரியவர்களே நமக்கு இப்படி புத்திபுகட்டி வரும்போதும், அதைக் கேளா மல் — 'சுயபாஷை மாண்டாலும் நமக் கென்ன? அல்லது எல்லாம் ஆங்கிலேய மாய்ப் போனாலும் வருங்குறை என்ன?' —என்று ஏமாறியிருக்கத் தலைவிதியோ?"

On the whole the lecture deserves to be studied by all the Tamilians in general and by all the school-going Tamil population in parti-

cular, not to speak of other Tamil lovers.

Later on, Sri Laksnmana Pillai wrote a *Play* called "Arumayal Natakam" in which was described the career of two lovers who had been married against their consent by their perversely obstinate parents. Here, he portrayed his own condition, but did not publish the play, for fear of offending his father.

He next turned to Shakespeare's "Cymbeline" and rendered it into Tamil prose, until he came to the third act, third scene, when he invented a new blank verse by stripping the Kattalaikalithurai of its rhyme and alliteration and making it continuous, instead of stopping at the end of every fourth line. This invention appeared to him not only to solve the difficulty of translating any English play into Tamil, but also to serve the purpose of original play-writing in Tamil. In point of diction and style, Sri Lakshmana Pillai's translation of Shakespeare is more dignified than that made by Sri S. Narayanaswami Iyer or even by Sri P. Sambanda Mudaliar.

Still another work which he translated in this period was Longfellow's *Psalm and Life*, into Metrical Tamil; and how successfully he

brought out, in the translation, the spirit of the original may be verified by the following sample :—

Longfellow's Original	Sri Lakshmana Pillai's Translation
Trust no Future howe'er pleasant,	மேற்சுகம் பெறலா மென்றிரா மலே,
Let the dead Past bury its dead,	போச்சு தென்றும் புழுங்கி கையாமலே,
Act, act in the living Present,	ஆச்சு நெஞ்சகம் ஆச்சுயர் தேவென்றே,
Heart within and God o'erhead.	ஏச்சிலாச்செயல் இன்றைக்குச் செய்கவே.

His lines on *Friendship*, viz,

" நின்னைப் புகழ்பவன்றன்னை இடர்க்குற்ற
நேசனென் றெண்ணுதே—அவன்
பன்னு மொழியென்ன காற்றல்லவோ, உண்மைப்
பாங்கென வோண்ணுதே.

கையிற் பொருளுள்ள மட்டும் எவரும் நின்
கண்ணுக்குக்கண் அடுப்பர்—நின்றன்
பையிற் பணமில்லையாகில், அவர் அந்தப்
பாராட்டெல்லாம் விடுப்பர்." etc

show that Sri Lakshmana Pillai learnt, early enough, to command Tamil poetry with as much ease and grace as Goldsmith had done English Poetry. Compare, for instance, Goldsmith's view about *Friendship.*

What is friendship but a name,
A charm that lulls to sleep,
A shade that follows wealth or fame,
But leaves the wretch to weep?

Finally, a short poem on Vidhi or Fate, which opens with the following stirring lines:—

" விதி,விதியென்று நாள் வீணாய்க்கழித்தே,
ஓதிபோலிருக்கும் உணர்வற்ற மாந்தர்காள்!
விதியென்பதென்ன, மதியென்பதென்ன,
மதியால் மதித்திரோ இதுகாறும் ஐயோ?"

and ends with the following wholesome conclusion—

" மதியது பெருகவே, விதியது விலகுமே;
மதியது தெரியவே, இருளது விலகுமே;
கதிமதி, கலைமதி, பொருள்மதி, புகழ்மதி,
விதியெனும் இருளது விலகவே, விலகவே!"

closed Pillai's literary career of this period.

No doubt a translation of Sophocles' *Philoctetes* was begun by Pillai in this period, but it was finished, retouched, and even printed by Addision and Co, Madras, only in the next.

period. A reference thereto will therefore be found in the next chapter.

(4) Musical.

Even in the short period of 5 months of his stay at Madras in 1886, Sri Lakshmana Pillai managed to move with one great music scholar, Sri M. Seshagiri Sastri, the then Superintendent of Sanskrit and Vernaculars, Presidency College, Madras, and also with two great music-celebrities, Messrs. Sarabha Sastri of *Flute* fame and Sivakkolundu of *Nagaswara* fame.

One Vythianatha Sastri introduced our Pillai to Sri M. Seshagiri Sastri who, with his wonted courtesy, welcomed the new comer. The latter, impelled by his youthful enthusiasm, waited for no formality, but straightaway opened his mind:—"Sir, I have come to listen to your Vina-play.". At once, the great scholar dropped his pen, took up his Vina, sat down on the floor, and played for full 3 hours at a stretch. Many of the musical combinations Sri Seshagiri Sastri produced were so splendid, that they showed he must have had persistent and life-long practice on the Vina.

When, at the close, Sri Lakshmana Pillai expressed his opinion that he had never before heard a Vina-play of such a high order, Sri Seshagiri Sastri replied with his characteristic modesty: "If you had listened to the Vina-play of Sri Kalyanakrishna Iyer of your own place, you would not have praised me thus." This was a revelation to Pillai, who felt rather ashamed that he had not been able to guage the merits of so great an artist of his own place, and who therefore made up his mind to hear him immediately after his return to Trivandrum.

Three days hence, Sri Lakshmana Pillai happened to hear the Violin-play of the same Seshagiri Sastri and found, to his utter amazement, that the performer played on the Violin with even more wonderful facility and skill than he had done on the Vina.

"Seshagiri," recorded Sri Lakshmana Pillai long afterwards, was, though short, big in stature; and one could not view with pleasure the contortions of his face, his constant gasping for breath, and the uneasy movements of his body, when his imagination caught fire".

Next Sunday, by appointment, Sri Laksh-

mana Pillai met Sri Seshagiri Sastri and sang before him *Bhairavi Raga*, a Thevaram and a few songs, one of which was his favourite Swati Thirunal's composition in Kedaragowla. Sri Sastri remarked at the end: "You have excellent aptitude for music and a fine voice capable of producing *Ravai's* (trills) in abundance. But you must understand that the *Ravai's* should find a place in singing only as a diamond in a necklace. The diamonds should be sparingly used and for artistic effect; and they should further be set off by gems of other colors in the neighbourhood. If there are too many diamonds close to one another in a jewel, the eye would feel a glut; and therefore their monotony should be relieved by the presence of other gems in their midst".

I think Sri Seshagiri Sastri's wise remarks of 1886 apply, with equal force, even today.

A few days hence, a Katha Performance by Sri Sarabha Sastri was organised in the same Sri Seshagiri Sastri's house. Sri Lakshmana Pillai went there, in time, but had, like the rest, to wait a while for the arrival of the Katha Performer.

A certain grown-up man brought a blind boy on his shoulders and deposited him in the midst of the audience. Without taking any notice of it, Sri Lakshmana Pillai asked Sri Seshagiri Sastri as to how long it would take for Sarabha Sastri to come; but the latter replied pointing to the boy: "This is Sarabha Sastri."

The peformance soon began; Sarabha Sastri recited the story of *Sita-Kalyanam* in an inimitable manner in Tamil. He had a look of simple innocence, which added a charm and grace to his speech. The recital was interspersed with excellent songs sung mostly from Thiagaraja. Sanskrit verses were also recited and explained in familiar Tamil. On hearing a beautiful description of a lotus flower, to which he compared the eyes of Sri Rama, Sri Lakshmana Pillai was moved to tears by the thought that the pretty performer had not been blessed with eye-sight to see the very flower he so graphically described.

Another evening, Sarabha Sastri's Flute performance was arranged to take place in a big upstair building. A very large crowd of people eagerly rushed to listen. Our Pillai

was also there. The performance, according to him, was such a splendid flow of melody as to leave an impression that none could rival him in the flute.

One evening a number of clerks of the Accountant General's Office were preparing to go to the Triplicane Parthasarathi Temple to hear the Nagaswara-play of the celebrated Sivakkolundu of Kumbakonam. From amidst those clerks, one Sri Thirmalaya Naidu (the future author of a brochure on *Thiagaraja*), went running to Sri Lakshmana Pillai and asked him if he liked to hear the great Sivakkolundu's music. It was only then that Pillai heard of that great piper's name; and, being afraid of losing a splendid opportunity, he at once agreed to accompany Sri Naidu. Both of them went to the Temple and found it most difficult to get an ingress. They pressed forward and passed through a sea of heads. Jammed in on every side, they made their way slowly, but steadily, to where Sivakkolundu was seated.

The Nagaswara-play began; and here is Sri Lakshmana Pillai's description of it:—

"Sivakkolundu elaborated *Bhairavi*. Each

brika that he played sent such a thrill into my frame that I felt as though an electric current passed through me. The *gamakas* which he produced, raised and rocked my mind to and fro, like the waves of the sea; and his magnificent combinations were panoramic in their sweep and variety."

Sivakkolundu, according to Pillai, was tall, well-built and richly dressed, and had more the appearance of a Zamindar than that of a Nagaswara-player. He had a gentle and courteous manner, not easily reconcileable with his august and imposing personality. He made a large fortune but, being issueless, dedicated most of it to temples.

Here the scene changed from Madras to Trivandrum.

Sri Lakshmana Pillai did not forget the resolve he had made at Madras, viz, the resolve to listen to the Vina-play of Sri Kalyanakrishnier, immediately after his return to Trivandrum. Accordingly, he heard Kalyanakrishnier's Vina-play to his heart's content. This led him on to hear a galaxy of the then Palace Vidwans of Travancore, such as, Parameswara Bhagavather and his two

sons, Mahadeva Iyer and Ramakrishnier, Ramachandra Bhagavather (brother of Kalyanakrishnier), Ragupathi Bhagavather and Ramaswamy Bhagavather. This again, led him on to study and further inquire about the Travancorean music, prior to his own time, as well as to formulate his own views on the music of Travancore, later on, in his splendid dissertation, called *Travancore Music and Musicians*, collected in his essays.

Now, the hearing of the music of the Travancorean musicians of his time materially contributed to the growth of Sri Lakshmana Pillai's own powers, filled his mind with musical images and thoughts, and fitted him for the career of a composer which the course of events led him to take up at a later date. Even the greatest vocalist of the day (and I may add, for 1000 years to come) Maha Vythianatha Iyer, it fell to the lot of Pillai to hear, and have his musical imagination further enriched.

One of the special traits of our Pillai was that he put into daily practice the noble sentiment of Thayumanavar:—"காகம் உறவு கலந்து உண்ணக் கண்டீர்." And this particular trait revealed itself even during his Probation

Period.

For instance, on the literary side of his career, he was not content with himself reading the books of his Library at Pazhavangadi, but encouraged his friends, acquaintances, and even strangers to follow his example by lending them his Library books, although he found, ere long, that some of his borrowers conveniently mistook the loan for a free gift, and never cared to return the books they had taken.

On the musical side also, he was not content with himself hearing the best music of the Palace, but enabled the public of Trivandrum to enjoy it by forming a *Gana Samaj* and organising periodical music performances under its auspices. The services of the Palace Vidwans were obtained under the sanction of the Travancore Government. Messrs. Rama Rao (the then Dewan), K. Ramaswamy Iyer (afterwards First Class Magistrate), S. Ramaswamier (afterwards District Judge), and P. Ramakrishnaier (Parameswara Bhagavather's second son),—all co-operated with our Pillai and contributed much to the success of the *Samaj*.

It now remains for me to refer to a terrible accident that befell Sri Lakshmana Pillai

about the middle of 1892, which closed his Probation Period and commenced an era of his literary and musical compositions.

I would ask my reader to forget, for the time being, his present moment, stir up his imagination, go back to 1892, and follow the physical movement of a dashing youth of about 28 years of age that Sri Lakshmana Pillai was, and observe, with awe and terror, how he got into the very jaws of death, how he struggled to get out of them, how the struggle threatened to end in disaster, and how with the hand of God, he very narrowly escaped from that horrible plight, with the result that we have been all benefited today by the soul-stirring songs he composed in grateful memory of the providential escape from the horrid accident, a detailed description of which will not be out of place.

One day in May 1892, Sri Lakshmana Pillai went with a party of 5 or 6 friends on a holiday trip to *Aruvikkarai*, a place about 10 miles to the north of Trivandrum, to bathe in the well-known *Waterfall* there, of which the following is a diagram.

On reaching the point E (Refer to the Diagram), Sri Lakshmana Pillai parted with his

friends and had a lonely walk across the shallow part of the river and reached the point F. He now wanted to swim across the eastern side of the pond (D), and reach the point (G). Accordingly, he plunged into the water of the pond, no doubt on its southern side. But lo! a strong circular under-current, the existence of which could not be suspected from the placid nature of the surface, drew him first to the north-east of the north bank of the pond and then, round towards the *Waterfall* (C), whence, if caught, he would be hurled with irresistible force into the gorge, and dashed to pieces against the rocks.

Sri Pillai perceived the danger, fought against the current, swam towards the north east of the pond, placed his feet in the water upon a small stone, which was unfortunately slippery, and tried to get upon the granite bank. But alas! the bank itself was slippery.

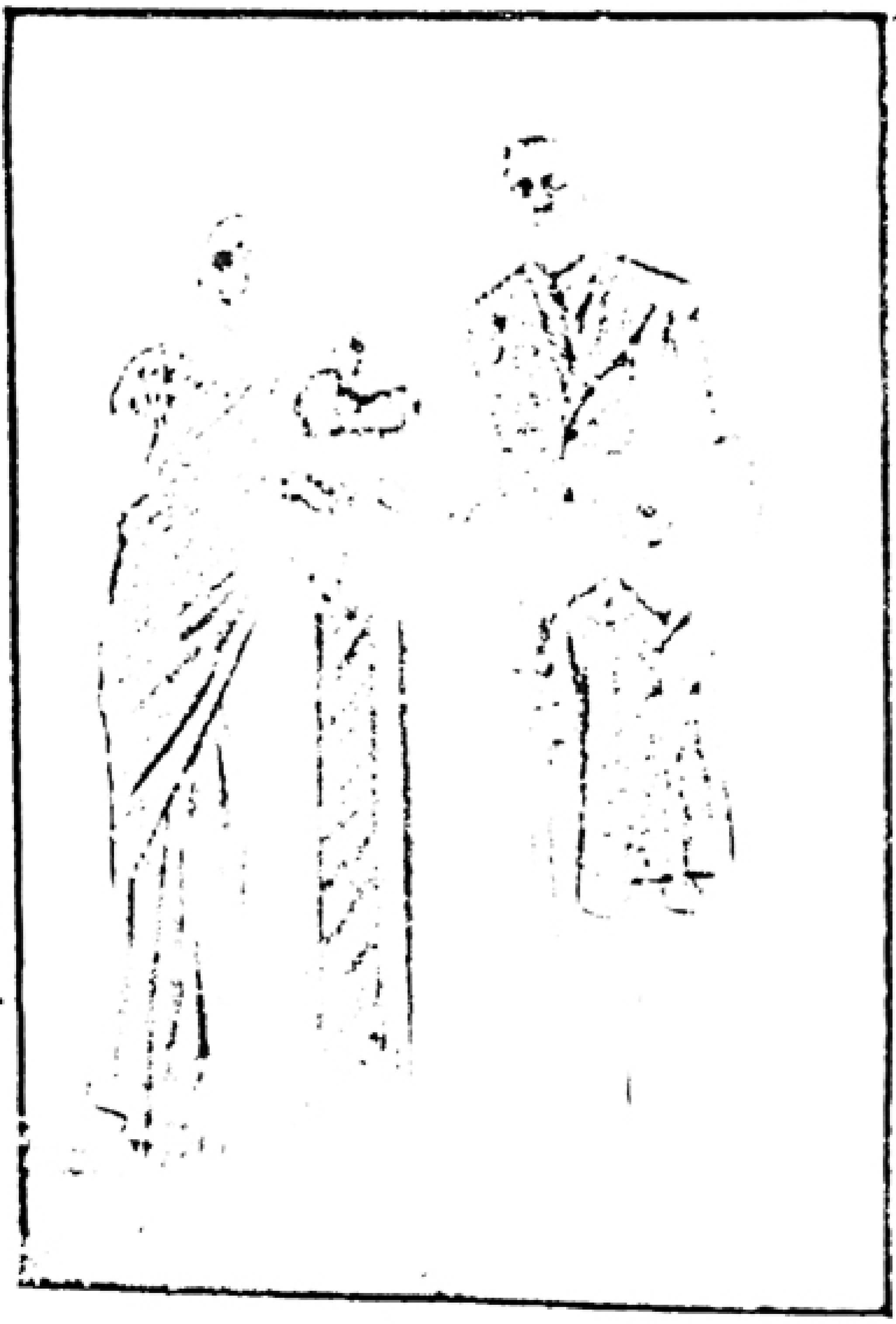
Without allowing him a moment's rest, the current drew him again towards the waterfall; and, again Pillai swam against it, only to find himself in the same helpless predicament on the slippery stone, beside the slippery bank, and to be dragged, once again, by the current towards the dreadful waterfall. This

ARUVIKKARAI

A	represents	the	High Road.
B	"	"	High Bank.
C	"	"	WATERFALL.
D	"	"	Pond.
E	"	"	point where Pillai parted with his friends.
F	"	"	point where he got into the Pond.
G	"	"	N. E. Bank which he reached.

To face page 50

To face Page 130 *Poonen Road House*



Lekshmi Amma, born 1902, with her husband & Childr-
To face Page 132.

process was repeated times without number; till the poor Pillai got tired, and felt convinced that the next dragging of the current meant and involved his impending death.

Resisting for a moment, even in that desperate condition, the mighty force of the merciless current, he fervently prayed, "O! God, save me from this impending danger, if I have served thee truly even for a moment." The prayer was at once granted, not perhaps for the mere asking, but as though for the reason that the devoted Bhakta had been charged with a grand purpose in life, which God wanted to see fulfilled.

When, therefore, he finally counteracted the mischief of the current; swam againt it; and swept his right hand, as before, over the north east bank of the pond, lo! Sri Lakshmana Pillai felt a hitherto undiscovered small notch there; gripped it with his fingers; and, by beating the whole hand upon the bank a number of times, concentrated the whole force of his body into the right arm, and successfully raised and threw his whole body over the bank, and also triumphantly scrambled to a safe distance from the current. Overcome by the

terrible strain upon his nerves, he soon swooned.

Just then, a faithful and devoted friend, Vadivelu Pillai, (who had perceived the danger and run round a hill to save Pillai), arrived, took hold of him, and led him slowly to a temple close by, accompanied by other friends. After an hour, Sri Lakshmana Pillai got up; but the very thought of the danger he had passed, made his head reel.

Now, Sri Lakshmana Pillai looked upon the life he had after the accident, as a new gift of God, and dedicated it, in gratitude, to the fulfilment of his aim to sing the praises of God and virtue, and incidentally, to advance the cause of Tamil music in its lyrical aspect by composing original Tamil lyrical songs.

(5) Humanitarian.

When he acted as Superintendent of the Mint office, which was then situated at Singarathope, Trivandrum, Sri Lakshmana Pillai had to pass round a turning at the Manacaud market, where the headless bodies of slaughtered sheep were every day exhibited in the stalls. To a born vegetarian like him, the sight could not but make a deep, melancholy impression,

never to be forgotten. At once did he begin to reflect on the problems of life, its cruelties, its selfishness, its arrogance, and its callousness, and therefore realised the need for the humanitarian education of the public, without which such practices could not stop. A resolve was then made by Pillai to inaugurate and undertake the work of humanitarian education some time in his life.

In the meantime, his humanitarian feelings pervaded many of his compositions, such as, for instance:—

"ஈயப்படாத தேடேல் உயிர்மாய்த்தல் ஓர்
ஞாயப்படாச் செயலே."

The following incident shows that Pillai felt delighted at the exhibition of the genuine humanitarian feeling, quite as much as he felt disgusted and horrified at the exhibition of the opposite feeling.

A petty sepoy, one of the Nair Brigáde Guard attached to the Mint office, stood near a well there, and saw a buffalo and a fellow sepoy approaching him at the same time, for some water to drink. At once, he drew water from the well in a bucket and placed it before the buffalo. After it drank, the sepoy handed

the empty bucket over to his fellow-sepoy.

"Why did you", cried the fellow sepoy in anger, "refuse drinking water to a brother sepoy, while you gave it to the buffalo?"

The sepoy answered. "The buffalo cannot speak out that it is thirsty, nor can it draw water for itself. You can do both."

"This genuine humanitarian feeling of the first sepoy", exclaimed Pillai, who witnessed the incident, "so roused my admiration that, but for the fact that he was a petty sepoy under my orders, I should have prostrated myself before his feet, as before a spiritual Guru."

Chapter III

PERIOD OF EARLY WORKS

The period of early works covered a clear decade and ranged from 1892 to 1902, both inclusive. I propose to divide even this period into five parts, as before, viz, (1) Official, (2) Domestic, (3) Literary (4) Musical and (5) Humanitarian.

(1) Official

The following table sums up Sri Lakshmana Pillai's official life during the period now under consideration:—

No.	Date	Nature of the post	Place	Pay	Allow-ance
1	Aug. 1892	Head Clerk, Commercial Office	Alleppey.	60	...
2	July '97	Salt Superintendent	Trivandrum	50	...
3	June '99	Acting Division Sheristadar	Kottayam	64	...
4	Oct. 1901	Permanent "	Do.	70	...
5	June 1902	Acting Tahsildar	Yettumanur	70	15
6	Oct. 1902	Do.	Karunagapali	70	15
7	Nov. 1902	Reversion to Post No. 4	Kottayam.	70	...
8	Jan. 1, 1903	Stamp & Stationery Supt.	Trivandrum	100	...

Be it remembered that the Dewan of Travancore tore Sri Lakshmana Pillai from the iron grip of the Maramat Engineer and sent him away to Alleppey on promotion in August 1892 Little did that Dewan know that in protecting Pillai from the rock of Scylla, he virtually exposed him to the whirlpool of Charybdis.

As the Head clerk of the Commercial office at Alleppey, Sri Lakshmana Pillai had to serve under the Commercial Agent and his Assistant. Soon after his joining the new appointment, a rather curious situation arose and threatened even to blast Pillai's prospects, though,—after much ado,—it ended in nothing.

The Governor of Madras, Lord Wenlock, was to visit Travancore; and the Commercial Agent was responsible for supplying the necessary relays of rowers to the Governor's boats from Pallathuruthi to Quilon. But he chose to go away to Karumadi, 10 miles south of Alleppey, with a view to arrange for raising a decorative Pandal there. Under such circumstances, the duty of supplying the rowers ought to have devolved on his Assistant; but it so

happened that, even when Pillai joined his new appointment at Alleppey, the Assistant had been on leave, owing to a severe lung-complaint, and that he had not joined duty back, even during the time of the Governor's visit.

The new incumbent was therefore called upon to face the situation with, however, no instructions as to the number of the rowers he had to employ. The innocent Sri Lakshmana Pillai, at once ran to the Commercial Agent's wife and told her his difficulty.

"Engage 150 rowers at once; and I shall hold myself responsible for the instruction I have now given you," was her ready reply.

Piously relying on this instruction, Sri Lakshmana Pillai engaged 150 rowers and fed them at Pallathuruthi. When the Governor's boats arrived, it was found that only 120 rowers were actually needed; and the remaining 30 had therefore to be disbanded. The ceremony, however, of the Governor's tour, was gone through with success.

Now, the Assistant rejoined office; and Sri Pillai expected that Assistant to congratulate him on, or at least approve of, what he had done in connection with the Governor's tour, especially when he was suddenly faced with a

new and tryiug situation, unmitigated by any definite official information for him to follow.

But lo! the following dirty scene as recorded by Pillai, took place:—

Assistant:—Why did you feed 150 men at Pallathuruthi, when only 120 men were needed? Who is to bear the excess expenditure?

Pillai—I had no previous experience of the situation with which I was suddenly faced. The Agent was at Karumadi; and you were on leave and away from Alleppey. I had no person to consult, nor had I even the time for it. Above all, I had no definite official instruction to follow. Under such circumstances, I ran to the Agent's wife, who fixed the number 150 and held herself responsible for it.

Assistant:—Will you write down that explanation and give it to me?

Pillai:—Will not my verbal explanation do?

Assistant:—No: you must write it and give it to me.

Write the explanation, therefore, Sri

Lakshmana Pillai did, and handed it over to the imperious Assistant, who delivered it to the Agent on his return from Karumadi, for necessary action.

The allusion, in the explanation, to his wife provoked the Agent to a rage. Away he ran to his wife and questioned her about it. Fearing her husband's temper, she flatly denied that she ever gave any instruction to the Head Clerk in the matter. Very wild with Pillai the Agent got and rebuked: "To protect yourself from an awkward situation, you gratuitously dragged my wife's name in your explanation. She flatly denies and even challenges your allegation."

The wrath of Pillai knew no bounds; and he replied: "Sir, I cannot brook this insult. I must tell you that I have not been used to telling lies. Please remember that I do not care for this appointment more than for my good name. Please also note that I belong to a respectable family and have a character to protect."

At this, the Agent was taken aback; and he ran upstairs. Here ended the scene.

Sri Lakshmana Pillai had reason to believe

that the Agent told his wife that the bold, open tone of the Head Clerk bespoke his innocence; that he again questioned her if she had ever given him any instruction in the matter; that the thus-heckled wife said *yes*, as she had to; and that, in her own skilful way, she managed to hush up the whole matter.

To make amends, therefore, for this ill-treatment, the Agent—a perfect (European) gentleman that he was—wrote to the Government, about March 1893, to confirm Sri Lakshmana Pillai in his appointment at Alleppey. And confirmed, accordingly, Pillai was.

The Assistant, on the other hand, smarted at the defeat of his first mischievous attempt to whip Pillai into submission, as one of his numerous 'dumb, driven cattle', and waited, like the stork in the story, for another opportunity.

But, good God! he waited for four long years, when an opportunity offered itself to him.

About the end of 1896, Sri Lakshmana Pillai took one day's casual leave; and it so happened that, on that every day, a plank was

found missing in the Alleppey Pier. The Pier Clerk, whose business it was to report the matter at once, kept quiet, as if nothing had happened. A few days hence, the Assistant came to know of it and, at once, pounced upon his long-aimed-for-prey, Sri Lakshmana Pillai, and demanded from him, instead of from the Pier Clerk, a written explanation as to why he had omitted to forthwith report the missing of a plank in the Alleppey Pier to the Police.

"Sir, I happened to be absent that day on casual leave; and none—not even the Pier Clerk—so much as even whispered the matter to me afterwards, till your query came to me like a revelation. I am sorry for it. Steps have been taken in the matter"—some such reply might, I think, have closed this unpleasant nonsense once for all.

But, annoyed times without number, throughout his stay at Alleppey, Sri Lakshmana Pillai wrote rather a lengthy reply, running to about 25 pages, wherein he went beyond the point of explanation, and ripped up all the old sores, laying special stress on the stubborn ill-will towards him on the part of the Assistant.

This explanation was shown to a few

friends of Pillai's, such as, Peraviperumal Pillai and his own brother Muthukumaruswami Pillai. The former spoke highly of it; while the latter gently remarked: "If this explanation is sent, a whigging for the tone of it would be got, though there is really nothing in it to be condemned."

It looks to me, at this distance of time, that the offence which Sri Lakshmana Pillai committed in this explanation was, not against truth, but against redtapism. And *redtapism* it was that, as we shall see presently, prevailed even against truth.

Undaunted by others' views, Sri Lakshmana Pillai did send the explanation; and the Assistant perused it, lost his temper, ran to the Agent, drew his attention to its strong language, and egged him to forthwith take the matter to the notice of the Dewan and get Pillai duly punished. Again, he wrote a confidential letter to the Chief Secretary against him.

These manoeverings had their desired effect. Sri Lakshmana Pillai was suspended for one month from January 28,1897.

At once did Pillai go to Trivandrum and meet the Dewan; and the following conversation between them, while it ended, on the

one hand, with the wished-for appointment at Trivandrum, throws, on the other hand, a flood of light on the triumph of redtapism over truth.

Dewan:—I know you are a very intelligent young man; but why did you quarrel with the Agent?

Pillai:—With the Agent I never quarrelled. I merely wrote an explanation which his Assistant demanded of me.

Dewan:—But the Agent was complaining about the state of feeling between you and his Assistant.

Pillai:—How could that, Sir, prove any fault on my side alone?

Dewan:—I know nothing of the details.

Pillai:—Did you not, Sir, read my explanation?

Dewan:—I did not. But what do you want me to do now?

Pillai:—Here is a memorial for a re-consideration of the Government's decision on the matter.

Having handed the *memorial* over to the Dewan, Sri Lakshmana Pillai took leave and went away.

The reader will do well to pause here and contemplate on the instructive nature of the above conversation.

While the quarrel, if at all, was waged between Sri Lakshmana Pillai and the Assistant, the Dewan opened the conversation with a curious query,—"Why did you quarrel with the Agent?" Again, when Pillai cornered the Dewan with a crushing reply,—"How could the Agent's complaining prove any fault on my side alone?," the Dewan's thoughtful reply was,—"I know nothing of the details!" And, further, when Pillai asked the Dewan if ever he read his explanation, the latter's significant reply was: "I did not!"

The irresistible inference is that the Dewan took care to keep himself in blissful ignorance of the details of the complaint, as well as of the explanation thereto, and never worried himself with the pros and cons of the question. but gravely passed a *Suspension order* on the person pointed out to him by the Agent, at the instance of his Assistant. O! How instructive!

What did the Dewan do with the memorial handed over to him by Pillai? The sequel

and what went before, alike show that it would have been merely *lodged* among the archives of the office, or perhaps consigned to the waste-paper basket.

The awkwardness of the position of a ministerial officer, Sri Lakshmana Pillai felt to the quick, took 4 month's extraordinary leave and tried for a transfer to Trivandrum,—not through the Dewan,—but through his son-in-law and private secretary. He, therefore, succeeded in securing the place of the salt Superintendent, Trivandrum, on a pay of Rs. 50, that is, Rs. 10 *less than* his previous pay, in July 1897.

Even at Trivandrum, Sri Lakshmana Pillai's official life was not wholly a matter of smooth-sailing.

Large quantities of salt and hundreds of empty salt bags and other articles were stored in huge sheds to the aggregate value of over two lakhs of rupees; and they were placed under the responsible custody of both the Superintendent and the Accountant, both of whom had furnished security-deposit of Rs. 2000 and Rs. 500 respectively.

But the loose arrangements made by the

Peishkar and the want of necessary safe-guards made the situation exceedingly risky. Hence, in a report, Sri Pillai pointed out that efficient arrangements should be made to safe-guard the interests of both the Superintendent and the Accountant against possible malpractices, when either of them happened to be on leave.

By this suggestion, however sensible it was, the Peishkar felt himself insulted and fancied that his liberty to be loose had been interfered with. He therefore passed a revengeful order that all the responsibilities of keeping all the goods in the Kooduchandram in safe custody rested *entirely* with the Superintendent,—an order flagrantly opposed to the spirit of the original order received from the Huzur.

An immediate consequence of this arbitrary order was that the Accountant openly disobeyed the Superintendent's order to keep one of the keys of the Shed containing empty bags, in token of the Accountant's partial responsibility. The matter of this open disobedience was forthwith reported to the Peishkar who turned against Pillai himself and demanded from him a written explanation as to why he had asked the Accountant to keep the key, referred to,

without his permission.

Sri Lakshmana Pillai's explanation assumed the form of an appeal to the Dewan and was duly handed over to the Peishkar to be forwarded to the Dewan. But, for obvious reasons, the Peishkar burked it and, getting scent of Pillai's intended visit to the Dewan, ran to *Bhakti Vilas* and met the Dewan, precisely at the time when Pillai began to make a personal representation of the whole situation.

"I know" interrupted the Peishkar, "Lakshmana Pillai and his family; and I am his well-wisher.

"Is this," retorted Pillai, "the action of a well-wisher? O! God, save me from such well-wishers."

The shrewd Dewan understood the whole situation and passed orders in Pillai's favour and thus saved him from the tyrannical grip of the Peishkar.

As per the advice of the Dewan and in token of reconciliation, Sri Lakshmana Pillai met the Peishkar in his house, a few days hence.

Look at the Peishkar's mentality which

even the Maharaja of Travancore might have taken note of.

"Lakshmana Pillai, !" exclaimed the exasperated Peishkar, "you have complained to the Dewan against me. But I am not afraid. I tell you that I would not be daunted, even if His Highness the Maharaja should upbraid me."

The suggested private-visit of Pillai to the Peishkar's house did not produce the desired reconciliation. On the other hand, the gap between the two officers widened, as time rolled on,

In March 1899, certain salt-contractors complained to the Peishkar that Pillai sternly rejected nearly 150 out of 200 bags of salt brought by them for acceptance under the contract.

That was enough for the Peishkar to vent out his long pent-up feelings against Pillai; and the following passage of words between them will be of interest even to the very head of the Travancore Government.

Peishkar.—Why did you reject so many bags of salt?

Pillai:—Because they were below the

sample received from the Huzur.

Peishkar:—The salt is good, and you may accept all the rejected bags.

Pillai:—Please issue an order to that effect, Sir.

Peishkar:—Will not my verbal order do?

Pillai:—But, Sir, the Huzur order is a written one; and I am bound to respect it.

Peishkar:—Lakshmana Pillai, you are quite right in not accepting the bags.

So saying, the Peishkar smiled and went away. But, as though he was giving a practical illustration of Shakespeare's line—

'One may smile and smile and be a villain,'—he incited the contractors to go and raise a huge complaint against Pillai to the Dewan. And so the contractors did.

Soon, the Dewan, the Peishkar, Pillai and two others met; and the following scene took place.

Dewan:—Lakshmana Pillai, what is this complaint against you? Why did you reject so many bags?

Pillai:—Here is the sealed sample bottle received from the Huzur; and the rejected bags were not up to that

sample, Sir.

Dewan :—Is not the salt pure?

Pillai :—Much of it is; but the size of the salt particles is not up to the mark.

Dewan:—Let me see the salt.

So saying, the Dewan inspected a few of the rejected bags and, finding them to be of good quality, though not of the required size of particles, said that such of the bags as were of the pattern selected by him might be accepted.

Sri Lakshmana Pillai had the selected bags duly sealed in the Dewan's presence and said that these sealed bags would henceforth be taken as samples, in supercession of the sealed sample received from the Huzur.

Forcibly impressed with Pillai's straightforwardness and honesty (for, a corrupt man could have easily made use of the situation to knock down for himself a round sum of money from the contractors), the Dewan called him to his side, while walking to his carriage, and started the following conversation.

Dewan :—You are a graduate?

Pillai:—Yes, Sir.

Dewan :—Have you passed any Law examin-

ation ?

Pillai :—No, Sir.

Dewan :—Why not?

Pillai :—While attending the Law Class, Dewan Rama Iyengar took me out of it and sent me away to Madras to study there the British System of Accounts.

Dewan :—And with what result?

Pillai :—The Dewan who sent me retired from office, before I returned; and his successor was not interested in account-reform. So, my knowledge of British System of Accounts was not utilised.

Dewan :—You should pass some Law Examination; and let me know it.

Pillai :—All right; thank you, Sir.

The Dewan departed; and in came the Peishkar and taunted Pillai: "You did not listen to *my* words the other day; and today you obeyed the *Dewan* implicitly."

"Yes, Sir," retorted Pillai, "you are one of the four Peishkars; and at any time you may be transferred from the Trivandrum Division; and your successor may not consider

your verbal order as a sufficient authority to set aside the Huzur written order. But, as for the Dewan, there is only one for the whole state; and he cannot be transferred, Sir."

At this, the whole party laughed loudly.

Two months hence, the Dewan sent for Pillai and asked him as to which of the two vacant places he would accept,—the permanent place of Salt Superintendent, North Division on Rs. 80 a month, or the acting place of the Division Sheristadar at Kottayam on Rs. 64 a month.

Pillai preferred the latter, as it enabled him to get out not only of a dangerously tempting department, but also of the clutches of a Peishkar who was determined to take advantage of his official position to wring a social benefit from Pillai by unconscionable ways.

Soon Pillai found himself as Acting Sheristadar, Kottayam, which, on confirmation, brought him Rs. 70 a month. But his painful surprise was that his old opponent, the old Assistant to the Alleppey Commercial Agent, was temporarily in charge of the Kottayam Peishkar's duties. In his mind, the embers of

the old rupture were smouldering, as evidenced by the fact that, when Pillai had a big money-suit to contest at the Alleppey Munsiff's Court, and applied to him therefore for two days' casual leave, he sternly declined to grant it, and wilfully brought about a heavy loss to Pillai,—consequent upon an *Ex-parte*-decree passed against him.

As though this mischief were not enough, he ordered Pillai to clear the correspondence from day to day without arrears, although the latter explained to him that it was an impossible task in a big office like his, where *tapals and anchals*, as the case might be, were received thrice a day at uncertain times. Surely, the evil-minded opponent would have carried the matter to a bitter end, but for the sudden, yet happy, transfer of Pillai to Yettumanoor, as its Tahsildar on a pay of Rs. 85 a month.

The reader will remember that, in 1899 the Dewan had advised Pillai to pass a law examination and let him know of it. Now, on May 13, 1902, Pillai passed the Magistrate's examination in the first class. On hearing this, the Dewan appointed Pillai as acting Tahsildar of of Yettumanoor for 3 months.

Even here, Pillai's straightforward and honest way of dealing with things exposed the maladministration of his immediate predecessor, now on leave.

Having duly taken charge of the treasury of Yettumanoor on June 28, 1904, and of the stamps next day, Sri Lakshmana Pillai noted that his predecessor had hurried away on the night of June 20, 1902, even against his protestations, without formally handing over charge of the *Bhannaram* or Temple treasury. Two days hence, Pillai reported the matter to the Dewan Peishkar who ordered him to take charge of the Bhannaram in the presence of the Deputy Tahsildar, Treasurer, Accountant, Devasom Accountants and Karanma Moothathu.

Accordingly, Pillai examined the Bhannaram for three days from 2nd July, drew up a Yadast of the contents, and sent the same to the Peishkar, to whom he further intimated that a sum of Rs. 1400 taken from the Vanjikays, placed in the temple gates, so early as May 7, 1092, continued to be held in the Outer treasury and entered in the general Pirinjavagay, without being placed at once in the Bhannaram

and credited in its accounts. Such delays would be a fruitful source of danger and confusion in accounts, and would offer a premium for misappropriation.

Again, in the course of the examination of the Bhannaram, a still greater irregularity was brought to light. A quantity of gold taken from the dismantled old steeple of the Sri Koil called *Thazhikakkudam*, weighing about 416 tolas and worth about Rs. 10000, was not found entered in the Bhannaram account. An entry of this was made in the Thiruvabharanam account alone to the effect that the gold was transferred to the Bhannaram chest; but no counter entry of the transfer was made in the account of the Bhannaram chest. This would afford an easy opportunity for the amount being misappropriated by a simple erasure of the single entry. Sri Lakshmana Pillai therefore made the counter entry and submitted the same to the Peishkar.

About three weeks hence, he again discovered that a quantity of over ten thulams out of the copper dismantled years ago from the roof of the shrine and placed in the custody of Karanma Moothathus, was stolen. On investi-

gation, he found that, out of ten, four thulams were hidden in a corner of the temple; and on further investigation, he learnt that the remaining six thulams had been thrown by the culprits into the temple well, to avoid detection. At once, he got the well drained by a pump; and the stolen property was found in it. The case was duly charged.

As regards Revenue work, Sri Lakshmana Pillai collected, in the midst of enormous difficulties, the major portion of the arrears of tax, which had till then been left to accumulate. To successfully do this collecting work, he had to move ceaselessly from place to place, and also enlist the co-operation of the neighbouring Vaikom Tahsildar.

The highly satisfactory way in which Pillai acquitted himself in his official duties, made an excellent impression upon the public, (as evidenced by an appreciative article in the *Manorama* of Kottayam, on his administration) as well as upon the Dewan, (as evidenced by his once again deputing Pillai to act as Tahsildar of Karunagapalli.)

At Karunagapalli, Sri Lakshmana Pillai had to tackle a very tough item of work, viz,

the preparation for the reception of the Governor, Lord Ampthill, on his journey through Karunagapalli to Trivandrum. Enlisting the co-operation of some prominent persons of the place, he had arches erected on the back water and arranged for the exhibition of Velakali games. The then acting Dewan expressed in a letter. dated November 8, 1902, his own as well as the Government's acknowledgments for, "the satisfactory arrangements made for the journey of the Governor through Karunagapalli Taluk." When he handed over charge to the permanent incumbent and returned to Kottayam, all the prominent people of Karunagapalli accompanied Sri Lakshmana Pillai, as a mark of respect and affection, to the landing place.

In a few weeks, that is, on January 1,1903, Sri Pillai was appointed, as Huzur Stamp and Stationery Superintendent, Trivandrum, on Rs. 100 a month. He was selected by the Dewan, to the exclusion of several applicants, solely as a result of the excellent opinion he had formed of his (Pillai's) ability and character.

Sri Lakshmana Pillai was now a Gazetted Officer and he took charge of his Gazetted Office

on January 30, 1903.

(2) *Domestic.*

Sri Lakshmana Pillai had to leave his wife (of course, second wife Devaki Ammal) behind, when he went to join his Alleppey appointment in August 1892; and it was only by the end of 1893 that she joined him at Alleppey.

Meanwhile, a series of calamities befell our Pillai. His pious aunt, Chinnathayi, his niece *Ammany*, and his own daughter by his first wife, *Balarama Valli*,—all died one after another. Such was his love for his daughter that when she died, he cried, :—

O! for the breath of a parted soul and the sight of a face that is nil!"

As if these calamities were not enough, Sri Lakshmana Pillai's old mother fell seriously ill of dysentery, but the regular use of Freeman's *Chlorodyne* saved her. Again, Sri Pillai himself was about to be drowned along with his cousin K. H. Neelakanta Pillai and his friends Messrs. K. S. Subramonya Iyer, K. Ramaswamy Iyer, and R. Srinivasa Iyengar, while all of them had gone boating in the Vembanad

Lake.

"For full 45 minutes," wrote Sri Pillai "the lives of the inmates quivered in the balance. Srinivasa Iyengar held the steering oar at the helm with a firm grip, while the rest rowed. And the boat cut its way right across the dashing waves. All praise was due to the helmsman, but for whose firmness, endurance and calmness, all the inmates of the boat would have found a watery grave. The escape was providential."

At Alleppey, it was in the Thondankulangarai house that Sri Pillai resided. Early in 1896, his family properties were divided. He got for his share nearly Rs. 30,000, coupled with a debt of Rs. 2,000. He attributed the credit of the peaceful partition to the intelligent guidance and direction of his brother, who was on that account, duly compensated with an additional sum of Rs. 500. Not long afterwards, the brother died; and the literary world sustained the loss of a person of brilliant parts, of deep and many-sided culture and of a measureless love of knowledge.

Now occured an incident, which I choose to record here for no other reason than that it

serves to elucidate Pillai's real nature and character.

It is said of Mr. Fox that he was an upright man who could always be most easily trusted on the side of his honour. A story is told of a tradesman calling upon Mr. Fox, one day, for the payment of a promissory note which he presented. Fox was engaged at the time in counting out gold. The tradesman asked to be paid from the money before him.

"No", said Fox, "I owe this money to Sheridan; it is a debt of honour; if any accident happened to me, he would have nothing to show."

"Then," replied the tradesman, "I change my debt into one of honor."

So replying, he tore up the pro-note. Conquered by this act Fox was, and he thanked the tradesman and paid him saying, "Then, Sheridan must wait; yours is a debt of older standing."

If Fox cleared a debt of honor contracted by himself, Sri Lakshmana Pillai cleared a debt of honor, contracted by his uncle, Virakumaru Pillai. Aundy Iyer, to whom the *debt of honour* was paid, spoke of Pillai as a man

exceptionally honest and straightforward, "and keen upon preserving the integrity of his family."

(3) Literary.

In 1893, Sri Lakshmana Pillai retouched his *Vilanatakam*, a Tamil Translation of Sophocles' *Philoctetes* and got it printed at Madras in 1898. In a Tamil Magazine, *Gnana Bodhini*, an able critic, Sri. Anavarathavinayakam Pillai, M.A, observed that *Vilanatakam* did not smack of translation, but looked like an original play, written in good and elegant diction and containing ethical maxims and worldly wisdom. But he did not see eye to eye with the translator as regards the suitability of the new metre (மயங்கு கட்டளைக் கலித்தொடர்) adopted by him, and therefore condemned it. The critic preferred the Akaval metre and pointed out *Manonmaniyam* as an example.

Sri Lakshmana Pillai stuck to his own position and replied that his new metre corresponded to the English pentametre in scope and compass, and was free from the monotonous rhythm in the middle, or at fixed or equal intervals. The Akaval was suitable more

for description or narration than for drama. The critic's citation of Manonmaniyam for the employment of Akaval was beside the point, in as much as 'that drama of 1891' was admitted by its very author to be absolutely unstageable. Treated as an epic, *Manonmaniyam* might take rank with the classical five; but as a drama, it should be considered as not a success. A new metre which would read as easy as prose for the purpose of a dialogue and, at the same time, act as a suitable vehicle for the expression of the best poetic sentiment, should be employed. That was what Sri Pillai did. Doubtless he did depart from the established usage. But is not such departure justified by Pavanandi in his immortal epigram:—

"பழையன கழிதலும் புதியன புகுதலும்,
வழுவல காலவகையி னானே"?

The story of *Vilanatakam* is simple and may be set forth as follows: Nine years before the play begins, '*Vilan*' (Philoctetes in the original) afflicted by a wound which made him noisome, had been treacherously abandoned in a desert island of Ilavana (Lemnos). He bore with him the famous Bows and Arrows of *Arkulan* (Hercules); and without these, a seer afterwards

declared, Taruvai (Troy) could not be taken. So, *Oulisan* (Ulysses) was commissioned to bring back, by force or fraud, the hero and his arms; and he took with him, to aid him in his purpose, *Naptan* (Neoptolemus), son of *Achillan* (Achilles).

When the play begins, Oulisan has landed at Ilavana and is instructing Naptan in his part. Naptan is to find Vilan and to reveal who he is, but pretend that he has come to take him, not to Taruvai, but home to the mother country Naptan, at first indignantly declines the task but, finally succumbs to play the traitor; meets Vilan coming forth from his cave; makes himself known; and to gain his confidence, relates fictitiously that he too has suffered at the hands of the Yavanas (Greeks). Vilan agreeing to accompany Naptan in the matter of going home, both of them are starting for the ship; when, a merchant-captain, (a sailor disguised by Oulisan), appears and tells them that the Yavana captains have been sent in pursuit of them both.

They therefore hasten their departure, but first visit the cave so that Vilan may fetch away the simples he needs to dress his wound.

As he is leaving the cave, Vilan is seized with a paroxysm of pain. Knowing that, after such an attack, deep slumber is wont to follow, he entrusts his Bow and Arrows to Naptan, who promises to keep them safe and restore them to their owner. On awakening, he demands his Bow; but Naptan refuses to give it back and confesses the plot that Vilan suspects.

Here follows a typical denouement by Vilan of Naptan's treachery, as well as a pathetic appeal to the latter's better nature. Stung by this denouement and *appeal*, Naptan repents, and is in the act of restoring the Bow, when Oulisan who has been watching the scene in hiding, appears to prevent him. Finally, Oulisan and Naptan left Vilan behind and went away with the Bow for the ship. The sailors persuaded Vilan to follow them; but Vilan would not.

Meanwhile, Naptan hurried back with the Bow to restore it to Vilan. But Oulisan who followed him arrests him and threatens to denounce him as a traitor to the host. Undaunted by the threat, Naptan returned the Bow and Arrows to Vilan, who would have at once slain Oulisan, had not Naptan stayed his hand.

Again, Vilan is urged to go back to Taruvai, but he refuses. Naptan, true to his word, agrees to take him home.

At this point, an Apparition is seen in the air above them, the divine form of Arukulan, who bids Vilan to go back to Taruvai with Naptan.

At last, Vilan bows to the will of Heaven.

It will be seen that this story is an episode of the Greek Epic *Iliad*, and that a Greek poet, *Sophocles*, chose to dramatise it, as he had done some of the other episodes of the same Epic, such as, *Ajax*, *Etectra*, and *Trachimae*, quite in the same manner as some of our own poets chose to dramatise a few of the more important episodes of the Indian Epic, *Ramayana*, such as, Ramabhadra's *Janakiparinayam*, Jayadeva's *Prasannaraghavam*, Murari's *Anargharaghavam* and Bhavabhooti's *Mahaviracharitam* and *Uttararamacharitam*.

The central lesson of *Vilanatakam*, like that of *Macbeth*, is to mark the steps by which a God's freeman may degenerate into a Devil's slave and also to show that (while some, like Macbeth, succumb to the Devil and utterly ruin their souls), some, like Naptan, awake, arise, and regain their original position as a God's freeman.

It is true that this *Vilanatakam* is a translation of a translation. That is to say, Sri Lakshmana Pillai, (being ignorant of Greek, in which Sophocles wrote his *Philoctetes*,) chose to translate it from Mr. Storr's English translation of it. But so did Pope with regard to his translation of Homer's *Iliad*. His ignorance of Greek is undeniable; and he only collected the general purport of every passage from some of his predecessors, such as, Dryden, Dacier, Chapman, or Hogley and versified it in his own characteristic way. Yet, Dr. Johnson spoke of Pope's translation as "the noblest version of poetry the world has ever seen." Gray declared: "No other translation will ever equal it." And Gibbon observed: "Pope's *Iliad* has every merit except that of faithfulness to the original."

In the case of Sri Lakshmana Pillai, his *Vilanatakam* is completely faithful to the original; and his Tamil does not stagnate, nor does it foam and fret like a mountain brook; but it flows continuously and majestically like a great river. It preserves, in descriptive parts, a warmth and elevation; in the narrative, a plainness and solemnity; in the speech, a

fulness and perspicuity; and in the sentence, a shortness and gravity.

On the whole, Sri Lakshmana Pillai's *Vilanatakam* must be pronounced a grand success and a splendid model for others to follow.

Our Pillai's Period of Early Works, now under consideration, happened to coincide with the time of the Boer war in South Africa. There was, then, great anxiety and excitement among the Europeans over the issue of the war, which seemed to challenge the British supremacy in the world. When the British fort of Mafeking was relieved after a long and distressing siege, there was a meeting of rejoicing, held at the Kottayam Club, presided over by Mr. V. I. Kesava Pillai, Dewan Peishkar. On that occasion, Sri Lakshmana Pillai recited a poem of his own, entitled the *Relief of Mafeking*, viz:—

> " Of this great thing, I come to sing,
> The glad relief of Mafeking,
> Which fort like England's smallest finger,
> In Boer's noose, full long did linger.
> The noose, thank God, has now been loosened,
> On Boers' own necks to be fastened.
> The Boers, brave though they have been,

Must homage pay to England's Queen;
For, valour yields to truth at last;
In both was England ne'er surpassed.
The Boers hurt her by their rash
Invasion and deserved a lash.
The English, tak'n in all relations,
Are nobler far than other nations,
The greatest architects we've got
Of human peace, with glory fraught,
Who conquer lands by science and thought
And not alone by shell and shot,
Who bravely fight and win, and then
Ne'er trample on their conquered men."

Be it noted that Sri Lakshmana Pillai's real ambition was to excel, not in English, but in Tamil Poetry. His admiration for Ramalingaswami and his study of Thiruvalluvar, fired him with an ambition to express his own highest thoughts and sentiments in Tamil, rather than in English.

Further, the poetic environment in which he lived at Kottayam, lent an additional force to this ambition. And that *poetic environment*, Sri Pillai himself depicts thus:—

"The house which I occupied in the town of Kottayam, called *Mathumalai*, was finely situated, not far from the Kodimathai bridge, at the end of the Kottayam canal. Built

almost wholly of wood, it stood recessed from the main road and had spacious premises, in part covered with grass and shrubs, and filled with cocoanut and other trees, within whose dark foliage several blithe little birds chirped sweet music every morning. A wide vista of paddy fields stretched on the west and south-west, through which cut a ten feet Road leading to Changanachery. During the monsoons, these fields were covered with water and presented the appearance of a lagoon. I used to have my morning walks through the said road; and I would never return without a new verse to be incorporated into my growing Tamil poem, or without a new song to be added to my musical compositions."

The 'growing Tamil poem,' referred to, is *Gnananandan Adi Malai*, which we shall consider in the next chapter.

(4) *Musical.*

Be it remembered that Sri Lakshmana Pillai dedicated the new lease of his life, vouchsafed to him by God after the terrible accident of May 1892, to compose Tamil Lyrical songs in praise of his Divine Saviour.

Prudently, therefore, did he equip himself for that grand purpose by listening to a famous piper, *Anayappan* of Tinnevelly, and to a famous singer, Anantharama Bhagavathar of Palghat, as well as by learning a few songs both of North and South Indian types from a reputed stage-singer, Mahadeva Iyer of Samburvadakarai.

It was in and from 1893 that Sri Lakshmana Pillai ventured to present the music-world with his own compositions. The famous lyrical kriti of Patnam Subramoni Iyer, viz, *Inka*, which he had learnt from Mahadeva Iyer and taught, in turn, to Anantharama Bhagavathar, stood him in good stead and enabled him to frame even his earliest compositions in the same lyrical style. Look, for instance, at his Bhairavi-kriti (துன்பம் துடைத்த) which is one of his earliest songs composed in 1893 but which, on account of its lyrical flavour, elicited the admiration of even Singaravelu, the famous piper of Kumbakonam.

Let us pause here and make a psychological enquiry, so to speak, as to why Sri Lakshmana Pillai, a devout Saivite that he was, did not, in the time honoured way, begin

his musical compositions with a song in honour of Ganesa,[1] but tumbled upon an inauspicious word துன்பம்[2] in the above-mentioned Bhairavi-kriti, which was translated by himself thus:—

> "Thy love, Great Spirit, nothing can match,
> That me from danger's lair did snatch."

What indeed was the *danger's lair* of which he was so much afraid that he incorporated it into an early, if not the earliest, song of his, consciously or unconsciously—perhaps the latter?

The reader will remember that at, or about the time of composing துன்பம் துடைத்த, Sri Lakshmana Pillai's mind was, as it must have been, haunted with the most unpleasant and, in a way, threatening incident,[3] in which the Assistant to the Commercial Agent had poisoned the Commercial Agent's mind against him (Pillai), and in which nothing less than the Commercial Agent's innate generosity saved him from the otherwise "danger's lair."

1. Three years hence, that is in 1896, Sri Lakshmana Pillai did compose a song on *Ganesa*, not of his own accord, but on account of the compulsion brought to bear on him by his Guru, Pichu Bhagavathar. See pages 98 and 99.

2. துன்பம் means pain or misery.

3. See page 62.

Either this *danger's lair* or that more terrible accident of May 1892, must have saturated itself in all his earlier songs of 1893, such as, for instance :—

1. நீயே துணையென்று in Yadukulakambodi which means,

"I come to Thee, my only stay;
Mother, O! save me now, I pray."

2. ஐயனே நான் in Kambodi, which means,

"Father, I do trust in Thee:
Know and have a care for me."

3. ஏதுகோபமோ in Vasanta, which means,

"As yet, He hath not yearned;
His ire, how have I earned ?"

4. மலைக்கவேண்டாம் in Mukhari, which means,

"Fear not, fear not, O! Heart, to thee
God's holy feet shall refuge be."

and 5. முன்னம் ரக்ஷித்த ஈசன் in Saveri, which means,

"Great God, who saved me *then*,
Will He not save again ?"

Even in 1894, Sri Lakshmana Pillai's official worry did not abate; and his weary mind was enough *care-tossed.* It was with such a 'care-tossed' mind that he took leave for one month and went to Trivandrum. On the journey, when the canoe neared Karumadi,

a place 10 miles to the south of Alleppey, the evening set in; and the ripples in the river Pallathuruthi were lit up by the golden rays of the setting sun. Indeed, the beautiful scene made a pleasant background for a *Sankara-bharana song*, which burst out of our Pillai's lips, beginning with அலை, meaning a wave, suggested by the ripples of the river; which, from the wording's point of view, was calculated to relieve his mind of his mental care; but which, from the musical point of view, made so much furor as to attract the notice of even the famous Bhagavatars of Trivandrum. That song was அலைமனமே வருந்தலை, which means:

"O weary mind, *care-tossed*,
In trouble be not lost."

I heard this song for the first time, in 1903, sung by Sri Pillai himself at Trivandrum, when an incident occurred, which brought Pillai and myself together and knitted us into a bond of friendship that, in the course of time, developed into such intimacy as impelled me to write a sketch of his life.

One of those that heard with me that song abruptly remarked: "This looks like Thiagaraja's *Endukupedhala.*" I at once asked: "Does the whole song of அலைமனமே look

like Thigaraja's *Endukupedhala*, or here and there, a few portions?" That one replied: "Here and there, a few portions." I then required the interrupter to point out those portions and, at last, forced him to admit that the point of similarity was after all *only one*, viz. the beginning of *Endukupedhala* and the passage from *Maname* into *Varundalai*. Finally I observed: "Such occasional overlapping is inevitable and must be passed over. Compare, for instance, Thiagaraja's நன்னுகன்னதல்லி நாபாக்யமா in Sindhukannada and Patnam Subramani Iyer's அலயேனுக நீகேமிதாதனு in Poornachandrika and see how they sound alike."

To continue the thread of our narrative, the memory of either his official slings and arrows, or of that terrible accident of 1892, continued to haunt Sri Pillai for years together. For, he burst out, in 1895, with a thanksgiving song, viz, இத்தனை யருள்பெற in Danyasi, which means:—

> "How have I served such grace to earn?
> What gratitude can I return?"

in 1897, with plaintive songs, viz, இதுவோ கருணை in Anandabhairavi, which means:—

> "Is this Thy mercy to me shown?
> Was faith for such a harvest sown?";

and இன்னஞ்சோதனை in Surati, which means:—

"Canst Thou so try me yet? Knowing my state,
Canst Thou remain so pitiless?";

in 1898, with a consoling song, viz, அஞ்சாதே நெஞ்சமே in Bhairavi, which means:—

"Fear not, fear not, O! Heart;
While God is on my part";

and in 1900, with hope-giving songs, viz, அன்றுவந்து in Arabhi, which means:—

"The grace that lifted me to land
That day, may today be at hand";

யாரெதிர்த்தாலென்ன in Todi, which means:—

"What reck I who assails me here?
Thy refuge found, what need I fear?";

and அஞ்சேல் in Pantuvarali, which means:—

"What can repay the tender love
That said, '*Fear not*' from far above?".

By this last song of அஞ்சேல், there hangs a tale. The reader will remember that the underhand manoeverings of the Assistant to the Commercial Agent of Alleppey led to our Pillai's suspension from 28th January 1897 for one month.[1] A similar suffering, Mr. K. Subramani Iyer, Superintendent of Tobacco Bankshall, underwent at the hands of the same Assistant, about the same time. Both the

1. See page 62.

sufferers met; and Sri Iyer expressed his sorrow to Sri Pillai, when a voice in the northern end of the room (of some one who was ignorant of what had transpired to both Pillai and Iyer), said in a loud tone, "அதைரியப்படவேண்டாம்", which means *Be not discouraged.*

"Surely, this is an Asariri, or a *word of God*, and I would persuade you as well as myself not to be disheartened," remarked Sri Iyer.

It was this superstitious belief that our Pillai christened into the Panthuvarali Kriti of அஞ்சேல், which bids fair to be a classical song, both from the literary and musical points of view,—*literary*, because of the excellent diction and the dozen similies employed therein, and *musical*, because of the artistic application of the *Ragalakshanas.*

From these songs of personal touch, the way to philosophical songs is easy; for suffering and philosophy are next-door neighbours. Hence it is that we have, in this period, a plethora of Pillai's philosophical songs, such as for instance:—

1. எல்லாமிறைவன் in Kanada, which means:—

   "All are the works of God; all good
   His essence, rigthtly understood;"

2. நெஞ்சேனுங்கோயிலில் in Kamas which means:

"Worship we the light that shines
In the heart, the shrine of shrines";

3. இந்தவுலகமோர், in Kalyani, which means:—
'"This world's a stage'; it being such,
All lives have parts, little or much";

4. ஞானம்பிறப்பது, in Hamsdhvani, which means:-
"Can consciousness from nothing be?
Of consciousness there is a sea";

5. மனமேஜடமேன்கோ, in Todi, which means:—
"Is matter mind, mind matter, analysed?
Matter and mind art Thou, unrealised?";

as well as of moral-inculcating songs, such as for instance:—

1. பக்திசெய்வதேன், in Surati, which means:—
"Of what avail is piety,
Where there is no sincerity?";

2. நீதிவிடாதோருக்காலும், in Mukhari, which means:—
"Justice fails not; she will reveal
In time, what now she may conceal";

3. செல்வத்திலே செல்வம், in Kedaragowla, which means:—

"Universal kindliness
Is th'essence of godliness."

At the end of the year 1895, Sri Lakshmana Pillai found he had composed quite a decent number of songs and also taught them to his first disciple, Krishnier of Pathamadai, who subsequently became *Samastana Vidwan* of Ettiapuram.

It was now 1896; and the far-famed Moollikal Utsavam, which annually attracted great pipers to the spot, began at Alleppey. Sri Lakshmana Pillai thought of availing himself of that opportunity to publish all his hitherto-composed songs, in the time-honored manner of *Arangetram* at his own 'Muppathu' House at Alleppey.

Unexpectedly, but quite agreeably, our Pillai's Guru, Pichu Bhagavatar of Avanancheri, came forth from the South, as though he had been invited to participate in the *Arangetram* ceremony.

"I am glad," observed Pichu Bhagavatar, "to hear of the *Arangetram* of your songs; but have you composed any song in honor of Ganesa, with which you have to commence the ceremony?"

"No," replied Sri Pillai, "for, generally, I sing only about one Supreme Being."[1]

"That won't do," insisted the Guru, "you must at once compose a song in honor of Ganesa and sing it at the *Arangetram* as the very first song."

At once, in deference to the direction of his Guru, did Sri Pillai compose the required song viz., கணநாதனை in Nattai, which means, "I worship Ganesa," with which the *Arangetram* was commenced in the midst of a very big gathering of his friends and admirers, including the renowned piper, Singaravelu of Kumbakonam. Pichu Bhagavatar elaborated the Raga of each of the songs that were sung by Sri Pillai and his disciple, Krishnier.

1. Evidently, Sri Pillai wanted to convey that he used to sing more of *Nirguna Brahma* than of *Saguna Brahma* and that the reason why he did not sing of Ganesa was that that God belonged to the latter category. But why did he sing of *Sivan* in his Saveri Kriti, முன்னம் சுழித்த? Anticipating this question, Sri Pillai observed, in a printed slip attached to a recent publication of his *Songs*, that the word *Sivan* occuring in the song முன்னம் சுழித்த was to be understood in the sense of *Sivam* (Parabrahmam) or the Supreme Being, (as used by Tirumular), and not as one of the Hindu Trinity. But, again, why did Sri Pillai assign to that *Sivam* an attribute of *Sivan*, viz., kicking Yama unto death? This question still remains unanswered, so my suggestion stands.

Fifteen songs were sung in that way, when the function came to a happy close.

From this time onward, Sri Lakshmana Pillai's name and fame began to spread far and wide,—so much so that, on his transfer to Trivandrum as Salt Superintendent in July 1897, the elite of that place was attracted to his house, not excluding the Palace Vidwans, of whom Messrs. Raghupati Bhagavatar and Ramaswami Bhagavatar appreciated his music most. Mr Appuswami Iyengar (afterwards Assistant Accountant Officer) wrote to a relation of his at Madras that if Pillai's songs were played on the instruments without the words being sung, they could not be distinguished from those of Thiagaraja.[1]

Our Pillai's disciples, now 4 in number were:—(1) the old Sri Krishnier (2) Sri Ranganathier who subsequently published Swathi Thirunal's songs (3) Sri Thanu Sastri who subsequently became a Harikatha Performer and (4) Sri Vengusivan who subsequently became a Sanyasi. These four popularised Pillai's songs throughout the State and even beyond.

1. As a matter of fact, Mr. V.P. Madhava Row, Dewan of Travancore, mistook Sri Pillai's song, when played on the instrument only, for Thigaraja's. This will be referred to later on.

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One of such songs was எக்காலத்திலும் in Todi, about which our Pillai narrates the following tale:—

"I wanted to compose a song in *Todi*; for, I was not satisfied with my previous Todi song, ஈசனே கைலாச. I tried to compose one of a better quality, but the strain invented bore a close resemblance to one of Thigaraja's Kritis in that raga. As my object was to compose an absolutely original strain, I rejected it and tried another which again met with the same fate. Indeed, I was at my wit's end to invent a new one, as Thigaraja would seem to have exhausted the potentialities of that raga. For months I was unsuccessful, though I racked my brains for it; and I therefore gave up the attempt in despair. At last, after about six months in 1898, a strain occured to me, all of a sudden, in Todi without *Panchama*. When I devoted my attention to it, I chanced to hit upon எக்காலத்திலும், with which Ramaswami Bhagavatar was so taken up that he learnt it at once and taught it, in turn, to Ragupathi Bhagavatar and Ramachandra Bhagavatar, who admired it none the less."

In the year 1898, four events successively took place and contributed to enhance the

popularity of Sri Lakshmana Pillai and raise him to the pinnacle of his musical glory.

First, Sri Lakshmana Pillai's musical activities drew the attention of Prince Asvati Thirunal, who arranged for his performance in the Sripadam Palace and who was so pleased with it that he presented the performer with a copy of his photo.

Secondly, Sri Pillai himself arranged for a Social gathering in his own residence, on the evening of 24th June 1898, in honor of Mr. G. Parameswaran Pillai, the talented Editor of the *Madras Standard*. The elite of Trivandrum was present there. Sri Lakshmana Pillai delivered a splendid address, played on his Vina and sang some of his new songs, which were immensely relished by the audience.

Thirdly, in August 19, 1898, Mr. Krishnaswami Row, Dewan of Travancore, invited Sri Lakshmana Pillai to sing his songs at Bhakti Vilas in connection with a Garden Party that was given in honor of Sir Savalai Ramaswami Mudaliar. The following extract appeared in the *Western Star*:—

"In response to the invitation of the Dewan, the cream of Trivandrum turned out

en masse in their best form to welcome and honor the distinguished guest. Among those present were:— Sri Narayanan Tampi (son of H. H. the Maharaja), Sri S. Sankarasubbier (Ex-Dewan), Dewan Bahadur Sri C. Venkobacharyar (Chief Justice), Justice Mr. Kunhiraman Nair, Justice Mr. Govinda Pillai, Sri Thanu Pillai (Chief Secretary), Sri Piraviperumal Pillai (Dewan Peishkar), the Raja of Parappanad, Magistrates, Engineers, Vakils, Schoolmasters and Merchants—all numbering over 200. After the pleasures of the table, the crowd moved to the spacious Drawing room upstairs at 6–30. P.M., where Sri Lakshmana Pillai discoursed sweet music to the delectation of the audience and proved himself to be a good poet of exceptional attainments."

Fourthly, Messrs. Muthuramalingam Pillai and Krishna Iyengar, the two Tamil Munshis of the local College, were so impressed with the excellence of the performance given at Bhakti Vilas, that they pressed Sri Lakshmana Pillai to celebrate a better *Arangetram* or a more formal publication of his songs at the Victoria Jubilee Town Hall, under the auspices of the College Tamil Society, in aid of the College

Tamil Library. Sri Pillai agreed. Accordingly, on the evening of October 6, 1898, a grand performance was given by Sri Lakshmana Pillai, at the said Town Hall, with Justice Mr. Govinda Pillai in the chair. Assisted by Sri. S. Ranganathaier in vocal music and by Mr. Jacob on the violin, Sri Pillai sang nine selected songs, each of which elicited a lusty applause. Now and then Sri Pillai explained the meaning of the songs he sang; and they were found to be highly philosophical, and no less ethical.

At the end of the performance, the two Munshis presented Sri Pillai with two versified testimonials; and Sri Thanu Pillai (Chief Secretary to the Government) went to the platform and said; "Mr. Lakshmana Pillai, our country is proud of you."

With this signal success, however merited, Sri Lakshmana Pillai was not puffed up. But he went on, with his wonted humility, composing more and more songs and thus added substantially to the stock of musical literature. A perusal of his *Songs*, recently published, will show what songs he composed from 1893 to 1902—the period of his Early Works.

To compose any song on set purpose, Sri Lakshmana Pillai rarely sat. But the strain occurred to him, now and then, as if by inspiration, either during his long morning walk, or during his longer teeth-cleansing, or even on the verandah of his Superior Officer's house.

For example, one day at about 10 A.M. Sri Lakshmana Pillai took a few office papers for report to the Peishkar, but was told by the peon that the Peishkar was just writing a judgment and that Sri Pillai would do well to wait for some time. Accordingly, Sri Pillai kept pacing up and down the verandah of the Peishkar's house, when a fine musical strain suddenly flashed on his mind in Yadukulakambodi. He felt that, if it was not at once recorded in svaras, it would be lost. So, he turned over his office papers to see if there were any urgent ones, requiring immediate report. Finding none, he asked the peon not to tell the Peishkar about his visit and returned home, where he duly recorded the said strain in svaras and, later on, developed it into a full-fledged song of என் சொல் உன்செவிக் கேற்குமோ which, when sung, caused Mr. A. J. Warkki, Diplomaed Homeopathist and violinist, to jump up and

cry, "That is like Rembrandt.!"

The song நானவர் யாரையும் in Kamas was the upshot of a feeling of bitter disappointment, caused by the wilful refusal of two day's casual leave to which Sri Pillai was entitled.[1] And again, the three songs, நன்றி கூறுவமே, நானுனை மறவேனே and மறவேனே, formed the outpourings of a grateful heart, when Sri Pillai met his son Virakumar, (who was really ill, but was mischievously reported to have died), *alive* and subsequently cured of his illness by the able treatment of Dr. Gomez.

(5) Humanitarian.

At about the end of 1898, a famine visited Travancore; and it was felt most severely by the fishermen of the sea-coast. The Government ordered that *Kanji* should be given to them free of cost; and the supervising work was entrusted to Sri Pillai. The crowd was too great for the quantity of rice supplied. Sri Pillai at once wrote for a larger supply of rice with, however, no immediate response. One morning, Sri Ratnaswamier, Dewan Peishkar, paid a surprise visit to Valiathurai in order to ascertain the truth of the demand for a larger

1. See page 73 above.

quantity of rice. He found Sri Lakshmana Pillai not only superintending the work, but actually distributing *Kanji* with his own hands, along with his staff, and was so impressed and pleased with it that he expressed his appreciation of Sri Pillai's earnestness and energy in carrying out the work, and ordered for a supply of double the quantity of rice originally sanctioned. The fishermen were so much delighted with this increased quantity that they began to accost Sri Pillai as கஞ்சிவீத்தின ஐயா, in loving remembrance of his charitable work in their midst.

Again, in the middle of 1902, when Sri Pillai was acting Tahsildar of Yettumanur, an outrageously inhuman act was brought to the notice of the Government. There was a huge live Bull dedicated to the shrine of Yettumanur; and, during processions, it used to be taken round with ornamental trappings. It was lodged in a shed surrounded by wooden railings in an open court-yard and was under the care of a paid keeper. Much of the money allotted for the maintenance of the Bull was misappropriated, with the result that the Bull, despite its big size, lost flesh for want of nourish-

ment and looked miserably lean. None cared to question this shocking cruel neglect. The Tahsildars, who were posted to the Taluk, minded their routine business and never turned an eye of pity on this maltreated animal. It would have been infinitely better and kinder, if it had been handed over to a butcher, or shot down on the spot.

Sri Lakshmana Pillai saw the animal and was at once shocked and deeply moved with pity. He questioned the keeper as to why the Bull was kept in that heart-rending condition. The keeper replied that the amount of allowance fixed for its maintenance was small. Sri Pillai knew that that was not the whole explanation. He ordered the keeper to bring the Bull every morning and evening to his own lodging and feed it in his own presence. The Bull then picked up flesh and looked as beautiful as ever it was. Sri Pillai wrote to the Huzur for an increased allowance to the Bull.

Such is the indifference of man towards his lower brute creation even in a place of worship, where he goes to pray for his own protection and prosperity. Sri Pillai burst out later on, with a Bull-song, viz :—

புன்னாகவராளி—ஆதி

வாயில்லாத மாடே — உன்றன்
வருத்தம் தீராதோ — அந்தோ

நீ யில்லாது மனிதர் உழுது நெற்பயிர் கொள்ளாரே ;
தாயில்லாதவர்க்கும் ஒருவன் தாயாயிருப்பதுண்டே
-ஐயோ, வாயில்லாத

தண்ணீருந் தருவானோ உனக்குத் தாக மெடுக்கும்போது ?
சக்கரங் கிடைக்குமென்றால், உன்னைச் சாமளவடிப்
பானே :

கண்ணீரும் விடுவாயோ உனது கால் வலிக்கும்போது ?
கால்நொண்டியான பின்னும், உனது கழுத்தை
முறிக்கிறானே-ஐயோ, வாயில்லாத

முன்பாரம் போதாமல், உனக்கு மூச்சுத் தடைந்தாலும்,
முட்டாள் வண்டிக்காரன் அறியான், முதுகில்
இடிக்கிறானே ;

வன்பாரம் ஏற்றத்திலே வருந்தி யிழுத்தும், அடிக்கிறானே ;
மாடு நீயல்ல கண்டாய், உன்னை வலிக்க அடிப்பவனே.
-ஐயோ, வாயில்லாத

தன்போற் பிறவுயிர்மேல் அன்பு தாங்கலன்றோ அறமாம் ?
தயவென்பதே அறியான், உன்னிற் றாழ்ந்தவன்,
ஐயமுண்டோ ?

உன்போல் அறிவிலிகள் பலபேர் உளரெனத்
தடையாதே ?

உன்போற் பொறுமைக்கோ, ஆ ! இங்கொருவருங் கிடை
யாதே-ஐயோ, வாயில்லாத

CHAPTER—IV

PERIOD OF LATER WORKS.

Sri Lakshmana Pillai's *Period of Later Works* ranged from January 1903 to March 1920, and may be studied with advantage under the same five heads.

( ) Official.

The following Table sums up Sri Pillai's official Life, during the period now under consideration.

No.	Date	Nature of the Post	Place	Pay Rs.	Allowance
1	Jan. 1903	Stamp & Stationery Superintendent	Trivandrum	100	
2	Aug. 1904	Superintendent, Account Office	Do.	100	
3	March 1905	Huzur Treasury Officer	Do.	150	
4	July 1906	Assistant Account Officer	Do.	175	
5	July 1907	Do.	Do.	200	
6	Oct. 1909	Huzur Treasury Officer	Do.	200	
7	Aug. 1911	1st Grade Tasildar and Major Treasury Officer	Do.	200	
8	Feb. 1912	Do.	Alleppey	200	
9	April 1914	Do.	Trivandrum	200	
10	Aug. 1917	Do.	Do.	200	50
11	Aug. 1918	Do.	Do.	250	
12	May 1920	Retirement on a Pension of	Do.	125	

Having, on the 30th January 1903, taken charge of his new duties of the Huzur Stamp and Stationery Superintendent at Trivandrum, Sri Lakshmana Pillai found the work to be so light that he had enough time to devote himself to his hobbies of music and literature.

A year and a half later, Mr. V. P. Madhava Row, who succeeded Mr. Krishnaswami Row as the Dewan of Travancore, recognised Sri Pillai's Account-training in Madras and drafted him into the Central Account and Audit Office as its Superintendent, on the same pay of Rs. 100. Here, our Pillai worked for a little over seven months, when he was appointed as Huzur Treasury Officer on Rs. 150—25—200.

It was now 1906. Mr. V. P. Madhava Row left Travancore for Mysore to enter upon the Dewan's duties there. Along with him, went away even his Financial Adviser, Mr. Subbaroyer.

Now Mr. P. V. Krishnaswami Chetti succeeded Mr. Subbaroyer with a modified designation, viz, Financial Secretary. Sri Lakshmana Pillai met the new incumbent and said: "When, 20 years back, I underwent Account

training in Madras, you were Superintendent of the Madras Accountant General's Office. I am glad I met you again here. But you will be sorry to hear that my Account-training has never been availed of by the State."

Forthwith, Mr. Krishnaswami Chetti visited the Huzur Treasury and formed a good impression of Sri Pillai's work,—so much so that, in July 1906, Sri Pillai was appointed as Assistant Account Officer on Rs. 175, which rose in one year to Rs. 200, and that, again on 5th August 1907, the new Financial Secretary expressed to the Dewan Mr. Gopalachari his immense satisfaction[1] of Sri Pillai's work and strongly recommended him to the sanctioned pay of the office, viz Rs. 250—25—350.

1. "I do not hesitate now to recommend him (Sri Pillai) to the sanctioned pay of the office, viz. Rs. 250—20—350. His application of the rules of the Account Department is invariably correct and is generally accepted. His objections are also generally acquiesced in by all offices. His zeal and promptitude in the discharge of his duties leave nothing to be desired. And as the Officer who is in the first instance brought into contact with all Departments and Offices (other than P.W. and Forest), and as the Officer who issues all necessary orders, it is no longer desirable to keep him on Rs. 200. I therefore recommend that he may at once be appointed to the minimum pay of the office, viz. Rs 250."

(*Initialled*) *P. V. K.—F.S.—5-8-07.*

Sri Lakshmana Pillai's relations and friends were naturally on the tiptoe to see Mr. Chetti's recommendation fructify, and Sri Pillai himself entertained a legitimate hope that his rise in the service was thenceforward assured.

But lo! a frost, a killing frost, nipped the *recommendation* in the bud; and Sri Pillai's severest trial in life began, as it ended, with *Jedwood justice.*

In April 1909, for the very first time in all his official career, Sri Lakshmana Pillai was fined Rs 10, and his promotion was barred for 6 months from May 4,1909.

For what? For a mistake discovered in Sri Pillai's Report *re* the strength of the Police! Ordinarily, the 'Report' would be sent back for *correction and return.* Why, then, were the *fining and barring* processes adopted?

Sri Lakshmana Pillai answers the question, and, in so doing, gives us a graphic account of what all transpired in connection therewith.

"To the then Tahsildar of Karunagapalli Taluq, who was drawing only Rs. 150 or so, and who had no technical qualifications in Accounts, the new Dewan *promised* the place of the

Assistant Account Officer. I, who occupied that 'promised' place must first be removed therefrom. The Dewan felt it a difficult task to remove an officer, against whom there was not a single blackmark, but in whose favour there was a cartload of official certificates.

One of them, from Dewan Mr. Krishnaswamy Rao, may be quoted here :—

"Mr. T. Lakshmana Pillai B. A. is a capable and trustworthy officer. He has qualified himself for the place of Tahsildar, and once or twice acted as such. He is very active and honest."

"Such, however, was the Dewan's determination to oblige the said Tahsildar that he shut his eyes to all my past services and, as a preliminary to remove me from my post, blackmarked me with a fine and promotion-bar, already referred to.

"I then forwarded to the Dewan the following letter:—

"The fine and the promotion-bar were vicariously imposed on me for the mistake committed by an Examiner in the matter of reporting the strength of the Police. The verification of figures in statements is the

sole work of the Examiner, and the supervision of that work rested with the Superintendent. It is expressly stated in the *Madras Manual of Accounts* that the responsibility for facts and figures rests entirely with the Superintendent. The Assistant Account Officer's function corresponds with that of the Deputy Accountant General, and is not the verification of figures, (for which the Superintendent and his Examiner are jointly and severally responsible), but *the application of the Account principles and rules.* In these circumstances, the imposition of a fine on me and the barring of my promotion amount to a woeful blunder. It is like fining a Peishkar for a fault in the official routine of a Tahsildar.

'In spite of this perspicuous defence', the Dewan declined to reopen the question.

"Meanwhile all the preliminaries for making the *promised* post available to the said Tahsildar were made. The Huzur Treasury Officer applied (or was made to apply), for 6 weeks' privilege leave on the ground of ill-health. And on the morning of October 10, 1909, I received an order, which looked like a thunderbolt to me, that I should vacate my

post in favour of the said Tahsildar and take charge of the Huzur Treasury forthwith.

"At once I took leave for one month, but not without addressing the Government thus:—

"Am I to take charge of the Treasury Officer's duties without prejudice to mine own? If not, is the order that I received meant as a punishment or a transfer? If the former, on what charge? If the latter, it amounts to depromotion, inasmuchas I had been promoted to my present post from the one to which I have been driven back by the order in question.

"But the reply was:—" The Government declines to discuss the question with Sri Lakshmana Pillai. On coming back from leave, Sri Pillai should take charge of the Huzar Treasury and remain there until further orders."

"On 11th November 1909, I took again 2 months' privilege leave and one year's furlough. I then wrote to the Government a pretty long letter, dated 24th November 1909, thus:—

"Unlike the Assistant Secretaries of the General Secretariat, the opportunities for my dealing directly with the Dewan are few and

far between; and the only occasions for my meeting the Dewan are, generally, when mistakes are committed. It is indeed a very unfortunate position, that the Dewan cannot observe the good things I do; that only mistakes committed in my Office are taken to his notice; and that in respect of my regular work, by which alone I can be tested, I have to submerge my personality in that of my immediate Superior Officer. My Office notes and opinions never reach the Dewan in their original form, but are absorbed in those of my Superior Officer. The Dewan has thus no opportunity whatever to observe and judge for himself of my work. I shall therefore quote for the edification of the Dewan my Superior Officers' certificates."

"Despite this eye-opening letter and a cart-load of the Superior Officers' certificates that were sent to him, the Dewan would not move an inch from his position. Nevertheless, he chose to write to me:—'Sri Lakshmana Piliai's appointment as the Huzur Treasury Officer is not a degradation, but only a transfer from one appointment to another, carrying the same pay. Having been thus transferred from the Account Office, his other requests cannot stand.'

"The above reply was only a make-believe. So, again I addressed the Government, on 5th February 1910, thus:—

'I thank the Government for their assuring me that my appointment as Huzur Treasury Officer is *not a degradation, but only a transfer* from one appointment to another, carrying the same pay. I may, however, add that the sum of Rs 200, which I now draw, represents the *minimum* pay of the appointment *from* which I am transferred, but the *maximum* pay of that *to* which I am transferred; that therefore the so-called "same pay" is a misnomer and really makes a world of difference, inasmuchas the one does not admit of any rise, while the other does; that the *Civil Service Regulations* point to the same interpretation; and, finally, that the Government, in a letter dated August 1907, have expressly declared that the post of Assistant Account Officer was higher in status than that of the Huzur Treasury Officer. Hence, it is submitted that my present transfer is in violation of the Rules and void *ab initio*.'

"Challenged thus on their own ground,

the authorities were in a fix to furnish a proper answer. But the exasperated Dewan could not brook being told that the Rules were violated. So he fell back, in a rage, upon the unlimited powers vested in him and caused the following final reply, dated 5th March 1910, to be communicated to me:—

'The Government had to post Sri Lakshmana Pillai as Huzur Treasury Officer on account of the *proved unfitness* for the headship of any section of the Central Account and Audit Office and therefore do not see their way to reconsider the transfer already ordered'.

"This *final reply* smacked of adding insult to the injury, and was surely an after-thought, conceived in a mood of despair. If *unfitness* were really the charge against me, it should have been clearly recorded and communicated to me formally, *before* the order of transfer. But in the face of the testimony of three previous Dewans and two Financial Officers who had vouched for my capacity, such a charge was not only preposterous, but also unthinkable. To call such a vague charge as 'proved' when it had not even been *formulated* or *signified* to me, was an audacious travesty of the truth and showed the lamentable extent to

which official chicanery and arrogance could be carried. Further, this 'final reply' of the Government stands self-condemned, inasmuch as it contradicts their own previous reply of the 4th January 1910, in which they unambiguously stated that the transfer implied *no degradation*.

"Naturally, therefore, did I write to the Government my last letter, dated 29th March of 1910, in which I challenged the Dewan to prove my unfitness for holding the post of Assistant Account Officer, or else, to withdraw the charge.

"But the Dewan could not do the former; and yet, he would not do the latter. So, he waited for full two months, after which he happened to meet me, one evening, at the Trivandrum Beach.

"That was enough for the following conversation to be carried on,—a conversation in which the reader will do well to read between the lines and ponder; for, it shows how triumphantly authority and intimidation can crush the claims of honest merit; how against the arbitrary action of an iron-willed Dewan, loyal and faithful servants are helpless,

how, under such a regime, rules can be freely trampled under foot; how even the expression of legitimate grievances can be successfully suppressed; and how, in fact,

> "Gilded honour can be shamefully misplaced,
> And right perfection wrongfully disgraced,
> And strength by limping sway disabled,
> And art made tongue-tied by authority,
> And folly, doctor-like, controlling skill,
> and simple truth miscalled simplicity,
> And captive good attending captain ill."

Here is the instructive conversation:—

Dewan:—Lakshmana Pillai, you must withdraw your last letter. Will you?

Pillai:—Why, Sir? What's wrong with it?

Dewan:—Nothing; but you must withdraw it.

Pillai:—Is there anything wrong with the tone of it? Or is there any mistake of fact or rule? If so, I am open to correction.

Dewan:—No; but you must withdraw it.

Pillai:—Why, Sir?

Dewan:—Well, if you do not withdraw it, the Government will have to pass proceedings against you; and it will seriously affect your future.

Pillai:—Proceedings for what, Sir?

Dewan:—That I am not prepared to tell you now. Something or other may crop up. I tell you it is better for you to follow my advice.

Pillai:—What fault have I committed?

Dewan:—Again, you are obstinate. Don't argue. Obey me now.

Pillai:—I shall withdraw my last letter.

Dewan:—See that you do not refer, in your letter of withdrawal, to this conversation.

Pillai:—All right, Sir.

"I returned home muttering:—This is the acme of unscrupulousness; but where is the remedy?"

"Eventually, I withdrew my last letter and, at once, recorded in my Diary thus:—'By the force of deliberate, subterranean, and insidious manoeverings; by reckless and unconscionable violation of the Rules; by evasive, self-contradictory, unscrupulous replies to just representations; and finally, by personal and private intimidation; I was unjustly deprived of the *lien* on my place in the Account Office as well as of the legitimate prospects of promotion which I had earned by more than three

years of hard and faithful service in that Office.'

"Even the then Chief Justice of the Travancore High Court, Mr. (afterwards Sir) T. Sadasiva Iyer (later on, High Court Judge, Madras), when he met the Dewan at Varkalai, soon after the event, observed; 'Is it such a difficult thing for a superior to find fault with, and injure a subordinate, if he has a mind to do so? I do not believe that Sri Lakshmana Pillai has committed a grave fault. Mere mistakes, even if any, should not be magnified into grave faults, for, in that case, which officer will escape? But, tell me why you persecuted Sri Pillai who was known to be an honest man.'

"No satisfactory answer came forth from the Dewan. Comment is needless."

Thus, Sri Pillai's severest trial ended, as it began, with Jedwood justice.

On the 11th December 1910, Sri Lakshmana Pillai joined duty, after leave, as the Huzur Treasury Officer. Eight months hence, he was made First Grade Tahsildar and Major Treasury Officer at Trivandrum, though on the same pay of Rs. 200.

Soon another unfortunate incident occurred; for, misfortune never comes single. That

incident was the defalcation of a sum of Rs. 860 from the Treasury Savings Bank by one Kolappa Pillai, Acting Accountant, by daring acts of forgery. The culprit bolted away; and Sri Lakshmana Pillai was made a scape-goat.

Unable either to arrest Kolappa Pillai (for he bolted away), or to attach his property (for his property could not be traced out), the Government found it convenient to pounce upon the Treasury Officer (Sri Lakshmana Pillai) and his Head Accountant; charged them with neglect in the matter of detecting, *in time*, the forgery; and directed them to show cause why they should not be required to reimburse the defalcated sum.

Sri Lakshmana Pillai replied, in defence, that the real cause which prevented the Head Accountant or, for that matter, the Treasury Officer, from detecting the defalcation, *in time*, was twofold; (1) The exceptional character of the method adopted to misappropriate the amount, viz, daring forgery, and (2) the want of a personal ledger, such as the one maintained in Post Offices. Thus, on ultimate analysis, the mistake may be traced to the bad

system of Account-keeping in the Office, which has not been rectified in spite of my repeatedly drawing the Government's attention thereto. Under these circumstances, the amount defalcated cannot be reasonably recovered either from the Head Accountant or from the Treasury Officer."

The word 'cannot' in Sri Pillai's reply gave the Dewan the most aggravated offence.

"Who is he to say *cannot*? I say *can*," muttered the Dewan with quivering lips.

Accordingly, both the Treasury Officer and the Head Accountant were ordered to reimburse the defalcated sum; and the former was transferred to the Alleppey Major Treasury, of which he took charge on February 9, 1912.

Sri Lakshmana Pillai dragged his Alleppey life for 2 long years, when the Dewan (who had by this time changed his heart and mark! confessed before persons like Dr. Venkatrama Naidu (Surgeon) that he had been misled into doing Lakshmana Pillai wrong), happened to meet the *so-wronged* person at Alleppey on one evening of March 1914; and the following conversation took place:—

Dewan:—Lakshmana Pillai, it is a long time

since I had a chat with you; come along; how is your health?

Pillai:—Thank you, Sir, the beach air is compensating for the bad climate of Alleppey. I am keeping indifferent health.

Dewan:—I am sorry I was not able to do anything for you.

Pillai:—You may have had your own difficulties.

Dewan:— Yes. I shall give you a transfer, if you send a D. O. to my Private Secretary, applying for a move to Trivandrum.

Pillai:—Sir, I shall be thankful even for small mercies, as I feel my situation in Alleppey like that of an exile.

Dewan:—Where do you live?

Pillai:—Near the Club, Sir.

At this stage, the Dewan wished Sri Pillai 'good night', reminded him of the D. O., and went away.

Next morning at about 9, the Dewan paid a surprise visit to Sri Lakshmana Pillai at his house, when Pillai, his wife (Devaki Ammal) and his children paid their respects

to the distinguished visitor and participated in the following conversation.

Dewan:—Your children all look intelligent.

Pillai:—It is their education that keeps me in public service. My female children feel it inconvenient to sit with boys in the Sanatana school; and the want of a Girls' school at Alleppey is badly felt.

Devaki Ammal:—The women of Alleppey have submitted a memorial to the Government for a Girls' school here; and I have also signed in the memorial.

Dewan:—Yes; I shall pass orders thereon.[1]

After *pansupari*, the Dewan took leave, but not without expressing again, his regret that he was not able to do anything for Pillai, whom he once again reminded of the D. O.

The D.O. applying for a move to Trivandrum was sent to the Dewan's Private Secretary at 11 A.M. on that very day; and the order of transfer was immediately passed. Sri Lakshmana Pillai returned to Trivandrum as Huznr

1. Pass orders the Dewan did; and a Girls' School came into being for the first time at Alleppey shortly afterwards.

Major Treasury Officer and took charge of his duties on April 29, 1914.

This 'transfer' was all that the Dewan could, in his repentent mood, do for Pillai.

The next Dewan made some reparation to our Pillai for the injury done to him by the preceding Dewan. On the 20th September 1914, Sri Pillai submitted to the new Dewan a formal representation, with all the necessary enclosures, in which the mutual inconsistency and the open, barefaced violation of the *Civil Service Regulation*, involved in the orders preceding his transfer to the Huzur Treasury were recapitulated.

On persual of the papers, the well meaning new Dewan was convinced that a real injustice had been done to Sri Lakshmana Pillai; and he therefore asked the then Account Officer why Sri Pillai should not be brought back to the Account Office.

That Officer could not speak a word against Pillai's efficiency as an Account Officer, but yet did not want him to step into the Account Office on private grounds. So, he employed an artful and strategic answer. Sri Lakshmana Pillai was long out of touch with Account work

and hence, if he were transferred here, the work would suffer."

This warning of the "suffering of work" reminded the Dewan of his instinctive smooth-sailing and, at once, he desisted from pressing the point any further.

Three years hence, two vacancies fell in the Account Office; and early in August 1917, Sri Pillai submitted to the Government his last memorial covering the same ground, but with greater force.

All that the smooth-sailing, loving Dewan could do in response was to grant Pillai a personal allowance of Rs. 50, which was subsequently converted into pay. Thus, on the 17th August of 1917, Sri Lakshmana Pillai's pay was Rs. 250.

"I am very happy," wrote Mr. N.G. Narayana Row, Munsiff of Kottayam (afterwards, High Court Judge), "to know that the Government were kind enough to increase your pay to Rs. 250. Your long service, undoubted ability, and unsullied character deserve a much higher recognition." That *higher recognition* was destined never to come. After giving him one year's extension of service, the Government, on March 19, 1920, passed orders for Sri Laksh-

mana Pillai's retirement, though the order reached Pillai's hands only 8 days hence, and though he actually retired 2 months hence.

It was between the order of his retirement and his actual retirement that I happened to leave Madura, along with my son, R. Natarajan, a lad of 12 years and pay Sri Pillai a flying visit on May 19, 1920, at his own residence in the Poonen Road. I had the honour to herald Sri Lakshmana Pillai into the region of sacred music, which was all his own, and from which he was privileged to proclaim peace even unto his persecutors and bless even those that cursed him.

A week hence, Sri Pillai finally handed over charge of the Divisional Treasury, Trivandrum, to his successor, Mr. Daniel, and retired from Government Service on a pension of Rs 125 a month.

In the very evening of his day of retirement (27-5-1920), there was a send-off meeting at the Sri Krishna Vilasom Hall, Thampanoor, with Dewan Bahadur A. Govinda Pillai, (Retired High Court Judge), in the chair. A splendid and impassioned speech about Pillai was made by Sri T. M. Krishnamacharyar, M.A., B.L. Then, the staff of the

Divisional Treasury and the Central Stamp Depot presented him with an Address, at the end of which the honored guest was taken in procession with Nagaswaram and Band, through the main public road to his house in Poonen Street.

Taking a retrospect of his whole official career, Sri Lakshmana Pillai may be characterised as:—

> "A man resolved and steady to his trust,
> Inflexible to ill and obstinately just."

At this distance of time, however, Sri Pillai's persecution seems to have been a God-sent blessing in disguise, which he himself perceived with the instinctive eye of a poet[1] that he was, for the reason that:—

> "The whole God plans,
> The Part man scans."

(2) Domestic.

Births, deaths, marriages, and house-sales —these it was that marked the domestic phase of Sri Lakshmana Pillai's career during this period.

1. See page 139.

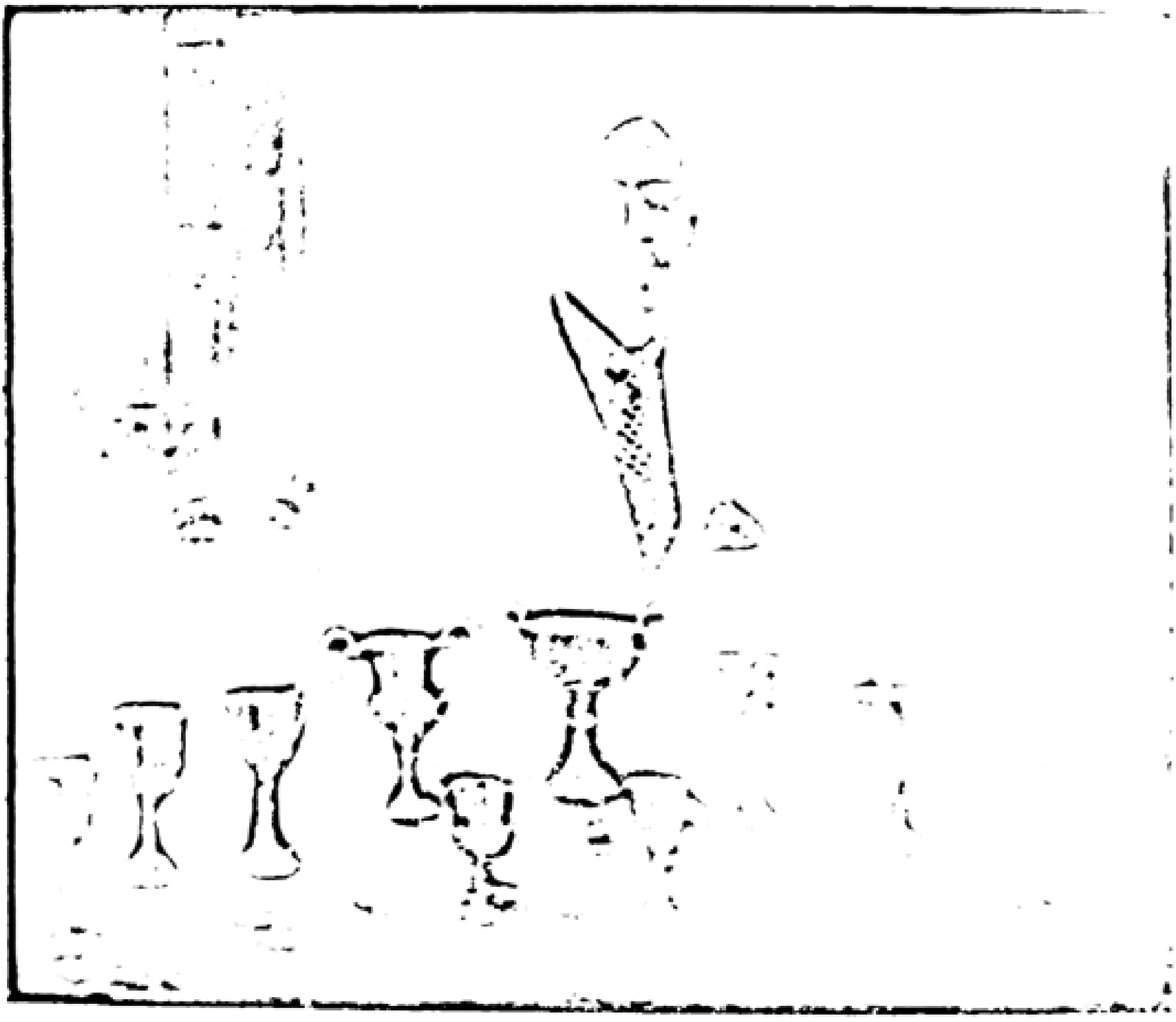
I would pass over this *domestic phase* but for the fact that our Pillai acquitted himself as a model father, which the world will do well to learn.

One and all his children, male or female, Sri Pillai made it a point to *educate*. For, he knew, as a close student of ***Kural***:—

> " விலங்கொடு மக்களனைய ரிலங்குநூல்
> கற்றாரோ டேனையவர்."

His first daughter, Lakshmi, was married to Sri A. Narayanan Nair, M.A., B.L., of the Travancore Secretariat, became, in time, an M.A., and has now two children – Venugopal and Vasantakumari. She is now Lecturer in Indian Music in the Maharaja's Women's College, Trivandrum, drawing Rs. 175 a month. She has also been District Commissioner of Girl Guides. She is proficient also in European Music and has passed the A.T.C.L. Examination, of the Trinity College of Music, London, as first in the Presidency.

His first son Ramakrishnan, besides taking his B.A. Degree and a tolerable cunning in Viṇa-play, achieved a unique name and (All-India) fame as a Tennis-Champion and, as such, won a good lot of silver and golden cups and



Ramakrishnan (1904 to 1933) with his Trophy.

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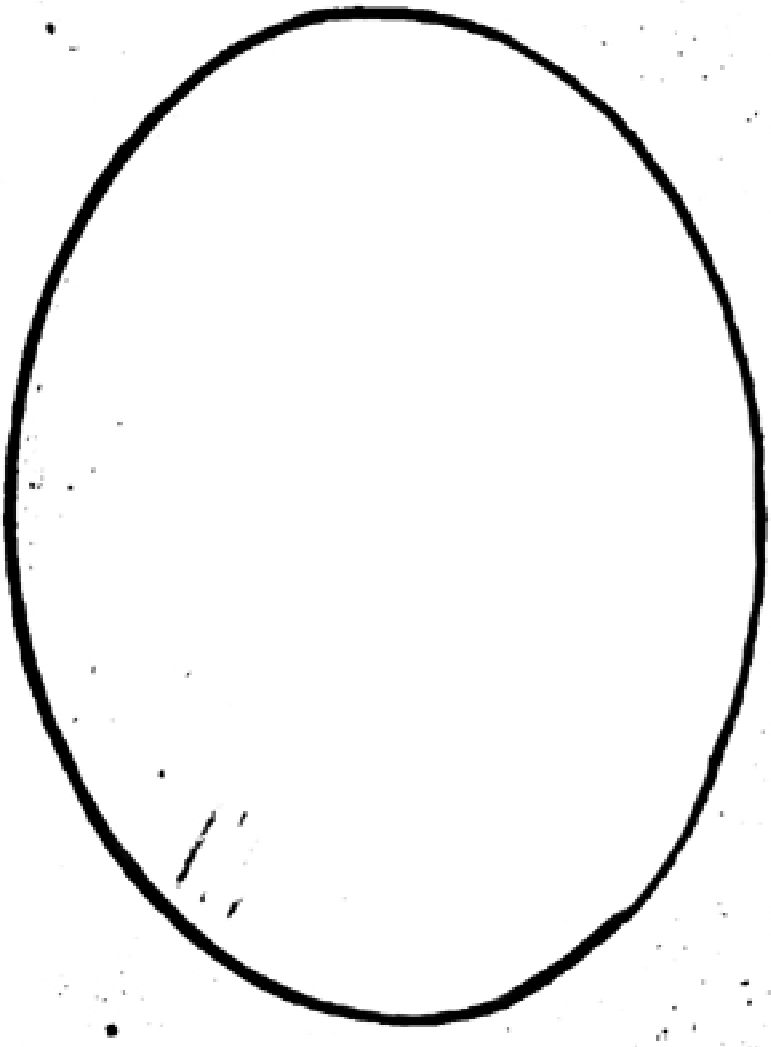

Minakshi Amma (1906 to 1931)

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medals, which adorn, even today, a whole shelf in Sri Pillai's residence. It is a pity that this promising young man suddenly died in 1933.

His second daughter, Minakshi, also became in time a B.A; learnt enough music from her father; married Sri. A.K. Gopala Pillai B.A., B.L; had two children, Parvati and Achyutan; and also filled the position of an Honorary Magistrate at Tinnevelly, where her husband practises as an Advocate. Perhaps her mission was over; for, she died in 1931, leaving behind her husband and children.

His second son Sankaran, had an Electrical Engineering Course at Bangalore and got the post of Traffic Inspector and Pilot to H. H. the Maharaja of Travancore. His wife, Chellamma, daughter of Sri Krishna Iyengar of Alleppey, is herself a graduate. Pillai's third and last son, Chandrasekaran,a graduate, bids fair to become a great painter.

As regards Sri Pillai's children by his first wife, Malay (alias Alagammal) fell a prey to consumption and, in spite of good treatment, left the world in 1913, leaving behind her parents as well as her husband, Sri Muthukumaraswami Pillai, to bemoan her loss. Her

aunt, who had brought her up, died soon of a broken heart. She has left two sons, Nilakanda Pillai and Lakshmana Pillai, the latter being a graduate.

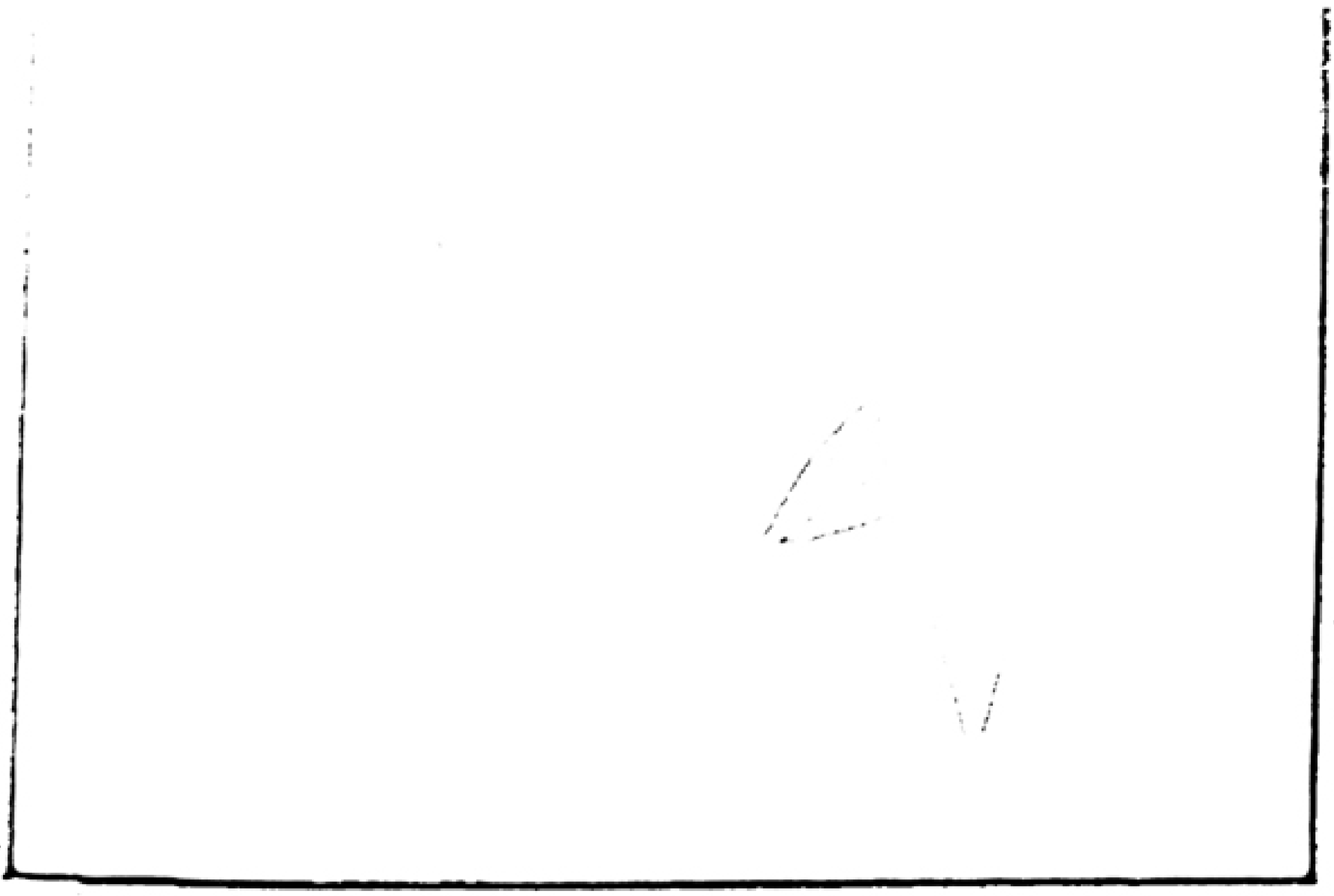
Two years hence, his son Virakumar, a promising scholar, followed his sister and left his father to deeply feel his loss for a long time after.

His last daughter, Sembakam was duly married to Sri. Ramakrishna Pillai, Co-operative Inspector. They are living today, quite comfortably, at Karamanai with a son and a daughter.

In 1908, Sri Lakshmana Pillai parted with his mother by death, and in 1911 and 1919, he parted with his Muppathu House at Alleppey and Puthenchandai House at Trivandrum, for Rs. 3000 and Rs. 7200 respectively.

(3) Literary.

Almost all Sri Lakshmana Pillai's remaining literary works saw the light of the day during this period, viz, *Gnananandhan Adi Malai* in 1903, *Ninaivakshi* in 1904, *Ravi Varma* in



Sankaran and Chandrasekharan
(Born 1908) (Born 1917)

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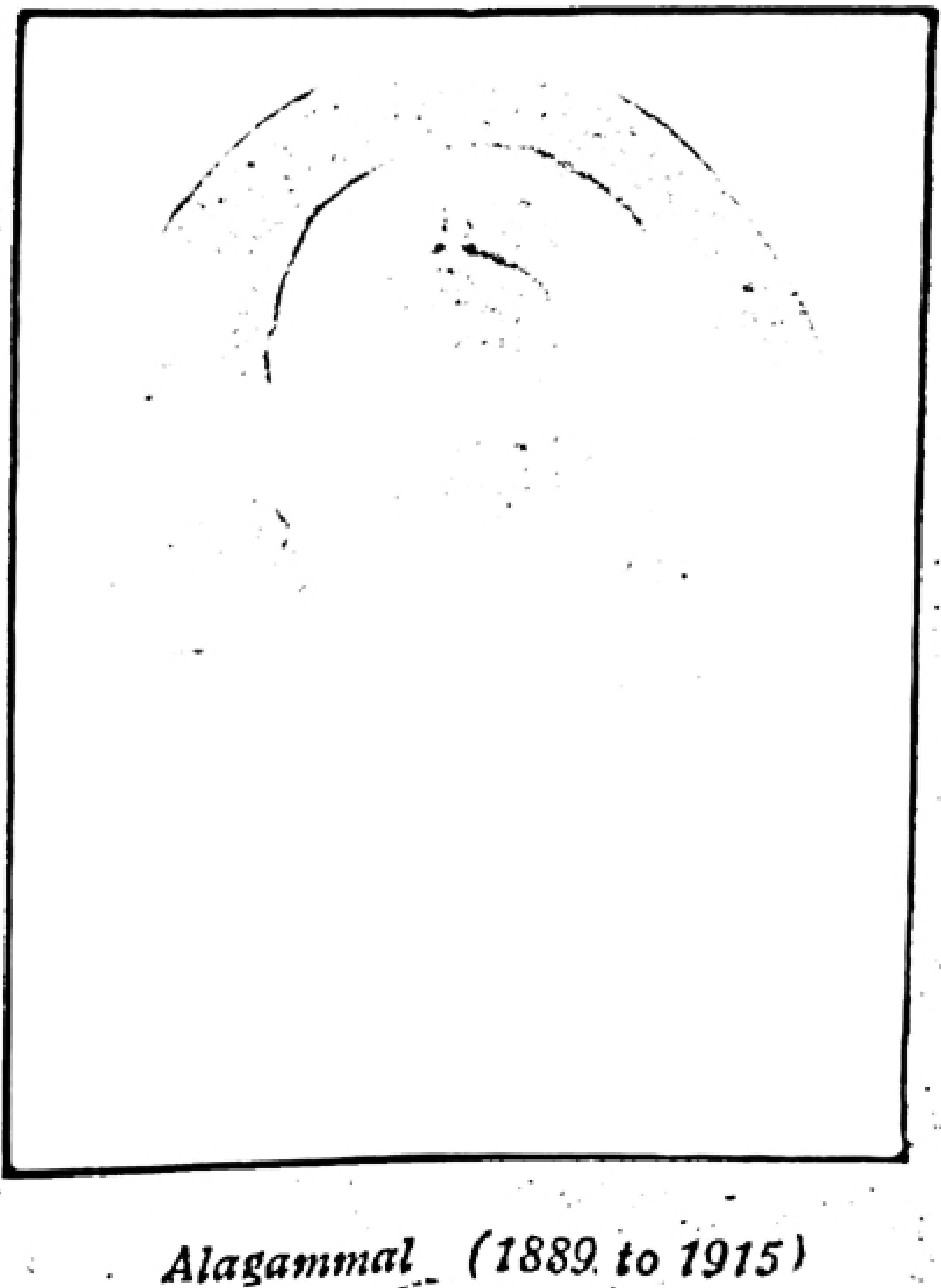

Alagammal (1889 to 1915)

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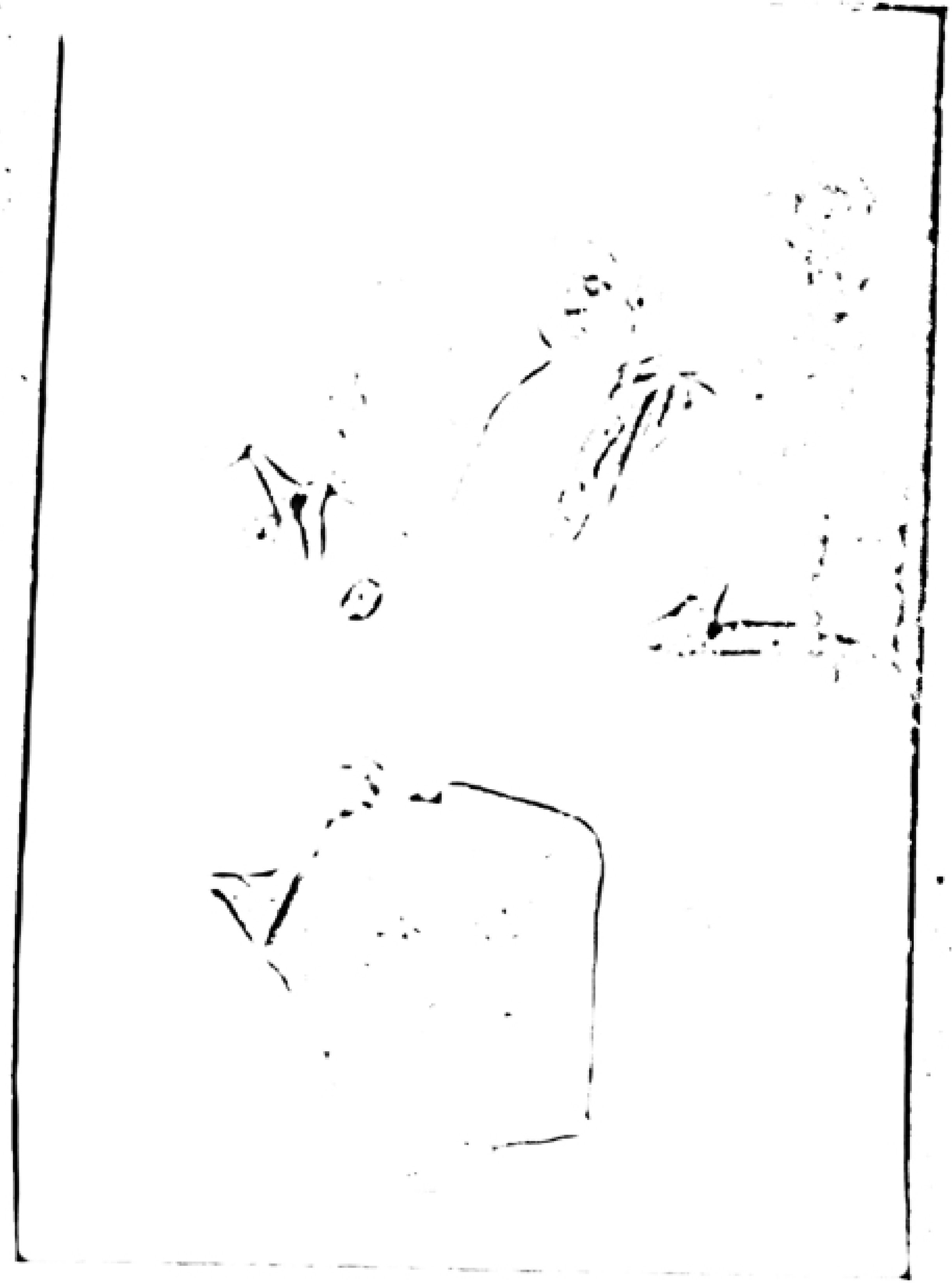
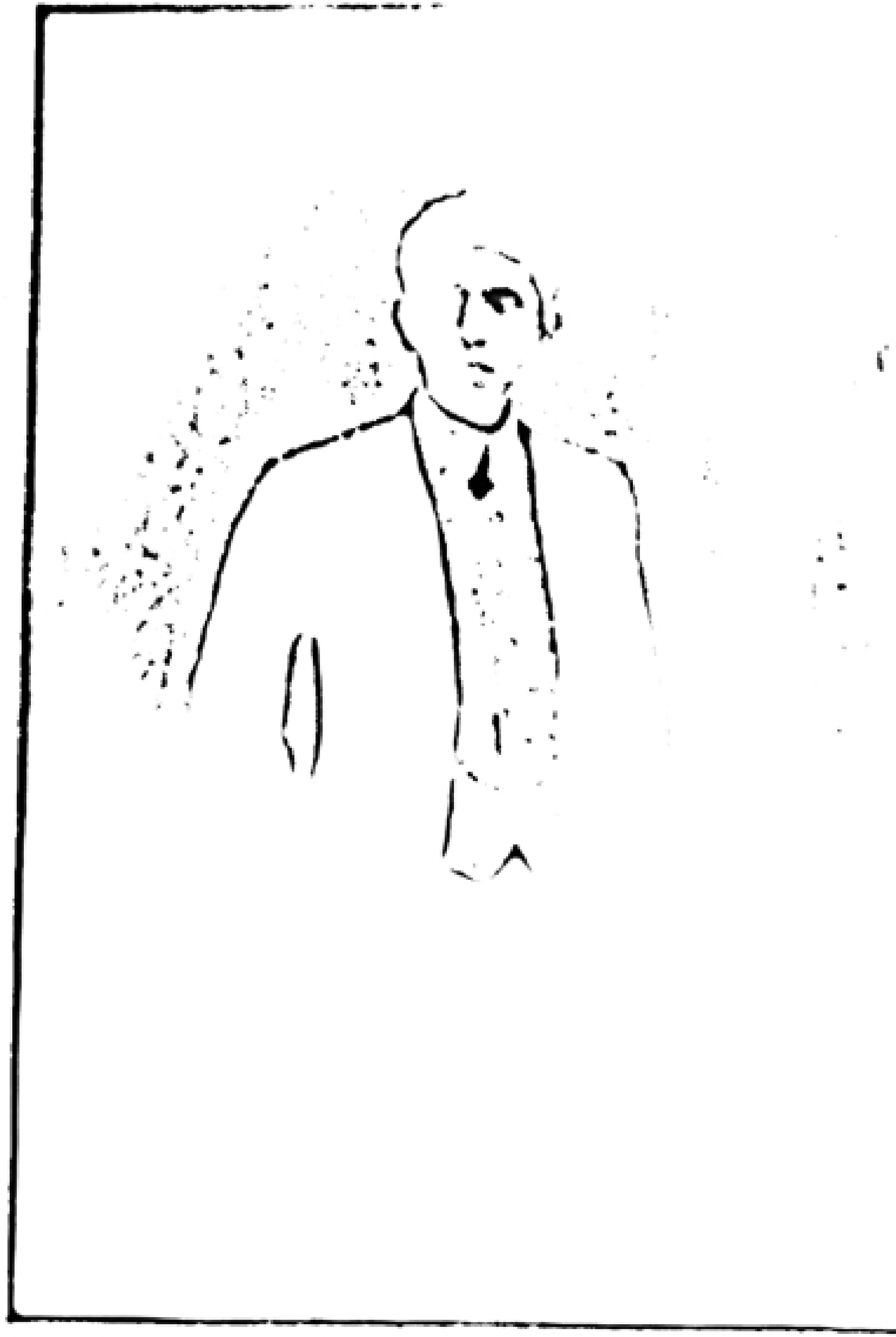


... Anmal (Born 1891) with her Husband



Virakumar (1888 to 1917)

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1906, and *English Essays* in 1918. His *Idioms in Tamil* and his *English-Tamil vocabulary*, alone remain still unpublished.

Besides these activities, Sri Pillai felt the necessity of a corporate movement of all the Travancore Tamilians, organised together. The Nairs had a sangam of their own; while, the Syrian Christians had the sympathy and support of their Ecclesiastical Heads. It was the Tamilians alone that appeared in Travancore, as a strangely unorganised and uncared for people. Look at Sri Pillai's own pathetic description of the Travancore Tamilians and of his own situation in their midst.

"I had to endure", observed Sri Pillai, "all the disadvantages that a Tamilian might be expected to meet with in an alien country. It is true that, in the time of Messrs. M. Swaminatha Pillai and P. Sundaram Pillai, there was something like a renaissance in Tamil Learning and an impetus was attempted to be given to Tamil study by the erection of a separate Hall at Puthenchandai. But almost none of the intended beneficiaries availed himself of the opportunity given. The general level of the *Non-Brahmin* Tamilians in Tamil or even in English, was low, be it due to their negligence,

poverty, or preoccupation, while, the *Brahmin* Tamilians seemed to care very little for Tamil. Nor did their ignorance of Tamil argue any satisfactory grounding in Sanskrit either. Except a small minority that took to music, and some that were fond of listening to the Puranas, very few cared for Art for its own sake, or for literature in their own Vernaculars. One need not, therefore, be surprised that those who visited me for conversation about Tamil Literature and recital from Tamil books, were very small in number, and could therefore be counted in one's fingers. In short, so far as Tamil was concerned, I was leading almost a life of seclusion, which was however compensated for by the pursuit of my other hobby Music. My musical compositions drew towards me a considerable number of visitors from time to time, not for the doctrines inculcated therein, but for their music."

It was under the stress of such despondent feelings that Sri Lakshmana Pillai started, with the co-operation of Messrs. Senadiraja, Sivaraja Pillai, Muthukumaraswami Pillai, Kumaresa Pillai, Subramania Pillai, and Ganapati Pillai, *the Travancore Tamilian Sangam*,

under the auspices of which no less than six Conferences were held in 1911, 1913, 1915, 1916, 1917, and 1918 at Boothapandy, Vadiveswaram, Olukanacheri (twice), Padmanabhapuram, and Trivandrum, when lectures were delivered by various persons, not excluding our Pillai, on the *Tamils-Past and Present, the Uplift of the Tamils, the Need for Organisation*, the *Tamil language and Literature, the Tamilian Fine arts, Agriculture, Trade, Kambaramayanam*, and so forth.

The stir created by these Conferences induced the then Director of Public Instruction to call for a *Special Tamil Conference* which met, on August 11,1917, at Nagercoil and discussed, amidst other things, a chief (and at that time, burning) question, viz "*Tamil* or *Malayalam*—which of the two should be the chief language in the schools of Nanjinad?" The final decision was that *Tamil* should be recognised as the chief language in Nanjinad, which might be, not inappropriately, regarded as Tamil Travancore, with Nagercoil as its capital. Down to this day, *Tamil* has been ever since taught as the chief language throughout Nanjinad.

Of those to whom the success of this movement was mainly due, Sri Lakshmana Pillai was surely one.

Even in Trivandrum (Chalai), Sri Pillai saw that a Tamil School was inaugurated on October 4,1919. What wonder then is there, if such a steady and genuine worker was recognised, as he had actually been, in and from 1903, as an important member of the *Madura Tamil Sangam*; which brought him in contact with such eminent scholars as, for instance, Pandit (now Dr.) V. Swaminatha Iyer and which gave him a further honor of Superintendentship of Sangam examinations at Trivandrum,—nay of Examinership, as well?

It now remains for me to enter into a discussion of some Sri Pillai's more important Literary works, published during the period now under consideration.

First, *Gnananandhan Adimalai* or "A Garland at the feet of God", which was published in 1903. This is a lyrical Tamil poem of 100 (strictly speaking, 132) verses, wherein high philosophical ideas and deep devotional sentiments lie profoundly imbedded.

For example, the following verse, viz:—

"ஆழ்ந்தகன்ற நோக்கினர்க்கு நன்மையலா
தகிலத்தி லணுவமில்லை;
மாழ்ந்தவுயி ருடல் மாறி வாழ்ந்தவுயிர்;
ஒன்றுக்கும் மரிப்பேயில்லை;
தாழ்ந்ததேன வுயர்ந்ததேனல் சங்கேத
மாம் பேச்சுத் தத்துவங்கள்
சூழ்ந்தவருக் குயிரிலெல்லா முலகிலெல்லாம்
ஒருசோதி துலக்கமாமே."

points to the truth that more evil lies in man's ignorance than in God's world; that the so-called evils are really blessings in disguise; and that, to grapple with them, God has endowed man with intelligence and will.[1]

Again another verse, viz:—

"தவமிருந்து தானொருவன் றனியாகச்
சாயுஜ்யம் சார்தலென்னும்,
பவமிருந்து தன்னினத்தா ருழல்பொழுது?
தன்மகவைப் பஞ்சம் வாட்ட
நவமிருந்த அமுதொருவன் உண்பதுவாம்;
நாம் பிறர்க்கு நன்மை செய்யா
தவமிருந்த வாழ்விலுமோர் அயமிருந்த
வாழ்வு மிக அருமையாமே."

lays bare the futility of asceticism and stigmatises a person's selfish prayer for his own individualistic salvation, when his brethren,—nay, his own children,—are undergoing incalcu-

1. See page 131.

lable sufferings in this world.

The question of *salvation*, as it is now generally understood, is doubtless one of individualistic concern; and each blessed individual desires to save himself, not through the world, nor by working with the world, but *in spite of* the world. From the moment when he imagines himself a favourite with God, he begins to hold other people in contempt. Mazzini, the Gandhi of Italy, noted the same arrogant ignorance in his country and proclaimed in 1835:—"We stand between 2 ages, between the grave of one world and the cradle of another, between the last boundary of individualistic philosophy and the threshold of Humanity." About the same year, Thygaraja in South India harped upon the same point and sang Yangudulu in Jayamanohari and, more pointedly, *Aparadamulanorva* in Vanali.

Quite a century has passed away since Mazzini's proclamation was made and Thygaraja's songs were sung. Still, the world is marking time and feels disinclined to march on to the new age. Rightly, therefore, did Sri Lakshmana Pillai think it worth his while to once again rivet the attention of the people upon the "threshold of Humanity."

Still another verse, viz:—

"சூனியத்தா லொன்று வாரா தொருபண்பு தோன்றிடுமேல்,
மேனிலைப் பண்புண்டு காரணத்தே; குறைமேவிடுமோ?
ஊனியக்காநின்ற ஊக்கமு முள்ளத்திடமு முண்ணுந்
தானியத்தால் வருமென்பதற் கென்ன தடையுளதே"?

reveals an attempt to detail the steps whereby the existence of a Supreme Intelligence may be proved by the negative method of Inductive Demonstration, the postulates to be granted being:—

(1) A thing, force, or attribute cannot be derived from nothing;

(2) A thing, force, or attribute cannot be derived exclusively from whatever is inferior to itself;

(3) Consciousness cannot be derived from anything or state of things which is less than consciousness, or which excludes consciousness;

(4) A person must, if starved, lose his mental and physical powers, unless nourished again.

This short survey of the poem is, I think, enough for the reader to be convinced that the subtle and intensely fervent spirit of the Eastern Philosophy has been skilfully combined with

the rigorously logical method of the West, and that the Tamil language in the hands of a proper person can be made a fitting vehicle of any new thought. A further reading of it will show him that it breathes from the beginning to the end an altruistic, not egoistic spirit; that it weaves together clear words and high thoughts into a sweet mystic music, in the manner of our ancient writers; that the lilt and rhythm as well as the varied alliterations and assonances of its verses bespeak a masterly hand; and that, according to a Calcutta Magazine (The Express), it bears a remarkable resemblance to Dr. Tagore's *Gitanjali*, in respect of both the subject matter and the time of production.

Secondly, *Ninaivakshi* or "Meditations." This second poem followed its predecessor one year hence, that is, in 1904. With 300 pithy yet crystalline verses, it seeks to furnish answers to various questions respecting the problems of man's existence and his relation to God and to every living creature in the world, as well as to relate those answers to the plan and order of the Universe and to the good and grand principles on which its eternal government

is founded. In fact, our Pillai's *Ninaivakshi*, like Milton's *Paradise Lost*, or Pope's *Essay on Man*, proceeded to laugh where it must, be candid where it could, but assert eternal Providence and justify the ways of God to man.

Look, at the outset, in what flowing verses Sri Pillai points to the common platform of all the religious creeds, on the strifes of which the ignorant world delights to gloat:—

1. "எண்ணுற்ற நால்வர் ஒருமலை காணுதற் கேற்படவே,
திண்ணுற்ற பாறை யொருவன், மரத்தின்றிர-
ளொருவன்,
தண்ணுற்ற ஓடை யொருவன், பறவைதனித்-
தொருவன்,
கண்ணுற்றபோல், பல்சமயத்தர்காண்பர் கடவுளையே.

2. சமயமெல்லாம்அடிக்கட்டிலொன்றே, அதுசத்தியமே;
அமைவதெல்லாம் ஒருசக்தியென்றும்;
ஒன்றகிலமென்றும்;
உமையொருபாகனுங் கண்ணனும்வேறலர்;
ஓர்பொருளே
தமதென வேறுமனங்களில் வேறெழுஞ் சாயைகளே.

3. கோவில்மட்டோ குடிகொண்டது தெய்வம்?
கோடிசெடியிற்
பூவிலுண்டே, அகப்பூவிலுண்டே,
வன்பொருப்பிலுண்டே,
காவிலுண்டே, பைங்கிளிகளின்
பாட்டிற் கலந்ததுண்டே,

நாவிலுண்டே, செய்யும் பாவிலுண்டே,
மெய்ந் நவில்போழுதே."

Again, Pope's pointed query, viz:—"Presumptuous Man! the reason wouldst thou find, Why formed so weak, so little, and so blind?" evokes in Sri Pillai an equally pointed reply, viz:—

"சோலையைப்பார், பகற்சோதியைப்பார்,
அகச்சோதியைப்பார்,
காலையைப்பார், அண்டமாலையைப்பார், புவிகாப்புடைய
வேலையைப்பார், அருள்வேலையில் வேறேதுவேணுமோரு
மூலையைப்பார், நின்சிறுமையும்பார்,
பக்தி மூண்டேழுமே."

Further again, the spirited appeal of J. H. Kellogg of America, viz:—"All about us in the world, there are overwhelming evidences of an all-pervading, all-controlling Personality. The regular rotation of day and night and of the seasons, the movements of the planets and the distant stars, the phenomena of plant life,—all speak to us in unmistakable tones of a Great Designer"—finds a no less spirited parallel in the Poem now under consideration:—

1 "விண்ணாரும் அண்டக்குழுவுமகண்டவெளியும் இந்த
மண்ணாருயிர்களும் பண்டமும் சூடு
மகிமை யேன்றன்

கண்ணாரக்கண்டும் கடவுளுண்டென்னக்கரி-
யேதற்கோ?
எண்ணாதகோடியும் சோல்லும் அவ்வுண்மை-
எடுத்தேடுத்தே.

2. திண்பார்க்கும் ஈசன்றிறம் பார்க்க
வேண்டில், திகழுகின்ற
விண்பார்க்க; மெய்யின் விசித்திரம்
பார்க்க; நம்மெய் யொடுங்கும்
மண்பார்க்க; மண்ணின் வளம்பார்க்கப்; பார்க்கு
மிம் மாண்கருவிக்
கண்பார்க்கப்; பின்கருதிப்பார்க்கச்
செய்த தேக்கையெனவே.

And finally, Shakespeare's immortal lines:—

"All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players,"

stand reflected in Sri Pillai's equally immortal lines:—

உலகமெல்லாம் ஒரு நாடகசாலை யென்றோர் பேரிய
புலவர் சோன்னார், அதிற் பொய்யில்லை;
காதல் பொருந்துவதும்,
கலகம் உண்டாவதும், கைப்பொருள் போவதும்,
கைவரண்டார்
இலகி எழுவதும், அந் நாடகம் நடந்தேறுதற்கே.

On the whole, Sri Lakshmana Pillai's standpoint, in his *Ninaivakshi*, is almost the same as he discussed in his lecture on *Worship*,

which cannot be better summarised than in the words of his own steadfast friend, Rao Bahadur Sri.K. Narayanan Pandalai, Retired Chief Secretary to the Government of Travancore, who presided at the said lecture:—

"As regards the question of Science vs. Religion, Science says that the Universe, governed and regulated by natural laws, is self-contained and self-sufficient, there being no need to postulate the existence of anything supernatural or miraculous, or the intervention of any being other than ourselves. On the other hand, Religion deliberately believes in a Power, a Mind, a Being entirely out of our sphere and beyond even our scientific ken; it says that the Universe is by no means self—contained or self-sufficient, but that it is dependent for its origin and maintenance upon the power and goodwill of a Being of which Science has no knowledge. Though Science seeks to explain away all natural phenomena by the application of the doctrines of gravitation, conservation of energy, evolution and so forth, there is still a longing of the mind, a yearning of the soul, to know something about the First Cause, which Science conveniently omits

to explain. To satisfy such yearning of the soul, it is necessary that we should believe in the existence of a Supreme Being which shapes all phenomena and which controls the whole Universe, and should also take to prayer which, amidst other things, generates a habit of regular religious devotion."

Hence did Sri Lakshmana Pillai rightly state:—

நிந்திக்கவோ இந்த நாவளித்தார்?
நித்யம் நேயமுடன் வந்திக்கவே.

and rightly cry down the life of a man without faith in God, as well as in His works:—

நம்பிக்கை யற்ற நரர் வாழ்வு இருளுற்ற ஞாலத்திலே
தும்பிக்கை யற்ற ஒரு யானை வாழ்வதுபோல், தொலையா
வம்புக்கும், வாசிக்கும், மல்லுக்கும், வேதைக்கும்,
வஞ்சனைகூர்
அம்புக்கும், ஓர் இலக்காவதல்லால் இன்படைவிலதே.

Even the central lesson of the *Gita*, viz:—"ஸமஸ்தே யோகா உச்யதே" finds a parallel in our Pillai's *Ninaivakshi*:—

கெடுநிலை மாற்றி விடலாம்; பொருள்
கிடைத்தோரும் எண்ண
மிடுநிலை எய்துதலாம்; கல்வி எய்துதலாம்; விரும்பப்
படுநிலைக் கீர்த்தி யுறலாம்; ஒரு பட்சம் பற்றுகிலா
நடுநிலை எய்தல் அரிதரிதே இந்த ஞாலத்திலே.

Thirdly, *Ravi Varma.* This is a drama on a historical basis which was written in 1906, but printed in 1917. Of this work, Sri Lakshmana Pillai observed in his preface:— "Ravi Varma is founded on the life of a great Travancorean Sovereign of that name, who lived in the 13th century A. D. and was no less renowned as a poet than as a conqueror. The story, of which but the barest hints are traceable in Archaeological publications, has been liberally amplified for dramatic purposes. The metre employed here, called *Mayangu Kalinilai Thodar*, மயங்கு கலிநிலைத் தொடர், was invented by me, inasmuchas it appears to me to be on all fours with the English Pentametre and, by its scope and easy flow, to be eminently suited for dramatic purposes." Of the two of the best critics of Travancore, viz, Messrs. Ulloor (now Mahakavi) Parameswara Iyer and Kerala Varma, F.M.U. the latter spoke of Ravi Varma as a masterpiece, and the former as one of the best specimens of the creative power and fertility of imagination of South Indian poets; while a Malayalam poet, Sri Kavithilakan Kottarathil Sankunni of Kottayam, grew so enthusiastic about the drama that he chose to translate it, in full, into Malayalam and published it in 1912.

The story of the drama may be set forth as follows. In the 13th century A. D., the kingdom of Quilon or *Jayasimhanadu* was ruled over by Ravi Varma, a chief real character in ancient Travancore history and the author of various Sanskrit works, such as *Pradyumnabhyudayam.* In the north of this kingdom, there was a principality called *Vembanad*, adjoining the present lake of that name. In the east, the Pandyan kingdom lay split up into 2 divisions, viz, the Nothern with Madura as its capital, under Vira Pandyan, and the Southern with Valliyur as its capital, under Kulasekaran, Vira Pandyan's brother.

For some flimsy reason, Kulasekaran contemplated an invasion of *Vembanad;* the Chief of which at once applied to Ravi Varma for help, which he got in time. While Vira-Pandyan, to whom Kulasekaran had applied for help, refused to send his brother any help, on account of the flimsy nature of the quarrel. Undauntedly, however, Kulasekaran applied to the Chola King for help; but, too impatient to wait for a reply, he boldly precipitated the invasion and singly attacked the combined armies of Ravi Varma and the Chief of *Vembanad.* The result was a foregone conclusion.

Kulasekaran was not only defeated, but also taken prisoner by Ravi Varma and conducted to Quilon, along with his daughter, Karpakavalli, who, being motherless, had accompanied her father even to the battle-field of Kondur. Here ends the first Act.

Ravi Varma who had only heard of the culture and charm of Karpakavalli, actually saw her in the battlefield and was at once smitten with love. On her arrival at Quilon, therefore, he sent her a message of love. But the messenger happened to be a selfish and wicked lord of the Royal family, Udayamarthandan by name, who secretly envied Ravi Varma and longed to marry Karpakavalli, as well as to seize the crown, but who, pretending to be very loyal to the King of Jayasimhanad, coaxed Ravi Varma into the belief that he was his true friend by such flattering terms as a courtier alone knew.

All the same, Ravi Varma's message of love was duly handed over to Karpakavalli, but not without being dissuaded from acceding to the King's wishes by such innuendoes as:—

உறுதிமொழி கொடுக்கு
முன்னே நன்காராய்வது நலம்; அதைப் பற்றிச் சற்று

ஓய்ந்த பொழுதில் உணர்த்தும் கவ்வை யுள்ளது.

Calmly did Karpakavalli reply to the dissuader, Udayamarthandan,—"நான் ஆராயாமல் ஒன்றும் செய்யேன்". But she at once assured the king of her real love for him, though at the same time she was careful to add, like a typically good Hindu girl that she was, that the consummation was subject to her father's consent. These were her very words on the point:—

"சிந்தை யறிந்தேன்; என்னுளமும்
திருவுளமும் ஒன்றுயினும், என்
தந்தைக் கேது சம்மத மாமோ,
தமியேற் கதுவே சம்மதமே."

The King was in a fix to decide what to do. He did not dare to liberate Kulasekaran who would not, in his turn, give his consent, unless liberated. While thus Ravi Varma's mind was swinging like a pendulum, the sudden news of the Chola King's invasion caused him to dismiss his love thoughts and concentrate his attention on the military manoevers, whereby to sucessfully resist the threatened invasion.

He therefore entrusted Jayasimhanad to Udayamarthandan and the South Pandy to Ilayaperumal, a faithful adherent of his, and

crossed the Travancore frontier with his army, in order that he might prevent the Chola King from reaching his own territory and creating any possible internal dissension. Here ends the second Act.

The wished—for opportunity offered itself to Udayamarthandan to carry out his nefarious design. He had now the country and the state exchequer in his hands, and Karpakavalli too was entirely at his mercy. Nevertheless, as a prudent man, he first tried to fortify himself on the throne of Jayasimhanad with the help of Vira Pandyan, and secondly, recounted the various devices whereby to decoy Karpakavalli thus:—

இரவிவர்மன் கூடச் சென்றது அவள் ஆவி;
என்பால் திரும்புவது எப்படி? ஆயினும், விடமாட்டேன்.
பெண்ணின் உள்ளம் காற்றாடி; அவளைத் திருப்பும்
திருக்காம் பகட்டு; மேனி முன்னால் திருப்பும்; பின்
செல்வம் திருப்பும்; அப்பால் திருப்பும் பக்கச்சொல்.
முன்ன திரண்டில் இரவிக் கிளையேன்; கடைசியதோ,
இப்போது எனக்கே யுரித்தாம்; அதனால், ஒரு னை நாள்:

பார்ப்பேன். மூன்றும் போதாவிடில், என்கை
வலியோ

உண்டே. எதற்காய் மலையவேண்டும் ?

Then, he employed a girl, Abhirami, to serve him as a go-between, which she,–however intelligent and able to rate Udayamarthandan at what he was worth,–felt compelled to act. But act even in that dirty business, she skilfully did.

First, a note of warning she sounded :—

எது சொல்லுகினும் கல்மேல் மோதும் அலைபோலாம்.

But the love-blinded Udayamarthandan replied :

கல்லும் உளியாற் சிதறுவதன்றோ ?

Suggestively did Abhirami retort :—

மாதரும் கீதமும் வன்மைக் கிணங்கின், நன்மையில்லை.

Still the infatuated Udayamarthandan persisted :—

முயன்றால், எய்தாப் பொருள் ஒன்றில்லை; உன் மனமே
கோணாதாயின், கோணல் வராது.

Away Abhirami went.

Meanwhile, Koopakakottan ill-advised Udayamarthandan that, in case of Abhirami's returning with a negative reply, the latter should remove Karpakavalli to the lonely village of Yenadimangalam by falsely charging her with theft of a valuable necklace from Ravi Varma's

palace; should try whether, under the influence of fear so caused, she did not reciprocate his offer; and as a last resort, should sastraically tie a *Tali* round her neck in the presence of a Purohit, applying, if need be, even force.

At this stage, a Sanyasini or female ascetic named Paramarti, appeared and extended her offer, which was accepted, that she should treat *gratis* Udayamarthandan's sickly elder sister, whose case had been declared by the previous doctors to be a hopeless one. In a few days, the patient recovered. In wonder did Udayamarthandan ask Paramarti as to how she cured her sister of her sickness, which no other doctor could have done.

Here began by way of answer, Paramarti's lecture on *Nerve force*, by the practical application of which she was able to get through. Here again a lively talk between Udayamarthandan and Paramarti followed and resulted in revealing to the latter what she had been secretly yearning to know.

Udayamarthandan:—Then treat me also for my sickness.

Paramarti—What are you suffering from?

U:—From *Love*.

P:—Is it proper for you to speak of *Love* to a woman, especially to an ascetic woman?

U:—My *Love* is not directed towards you.

P:—Whom else, then?

U:—Karpakavalli, daughter of Kulasekaran of South Pandy.

P:—As a doctor, I must know the previous history of your love sickness. Tell me therefore what steps you took to cure yourself of it.

The answer which Udayamarthandan gave (which was but a repetition of Koopakakottan's ill-advice, already referred to) enabled Paramarti to successfully get through her secret plan.

What was the secret plan? Indeed, who was Paramarti? Was she a real ascetic or a disguised person? Paramarti was no other than *Meikondal* who had accompanied her friend, Karpakavalli, to the battle of Kondur, but who, on the latter's capture, had run back to Valliyur. She now felt doubly sorry,—first, for having been torn away from her friend Karpakavalli and, secondly, for being in season and out of season importuned by Ilayaperumal for her hand. So, she determined to set

out in disguise, having already arranged, through the co-operation of her brother Kutralam, to secure, whenever needed, the help of a set of Maravars, headed by Viraparanathan. Hence it was that she concealed her person in the garb of a Sanyasini and, with the pseudonym of Paramarti, went to meet Udayamarthandan.

Now that the whole secret about Karpakavalli was pumped out from Udayamarthandan himself, Meikondal,—still pretending to be Paramarti,—waited till the whole of that secret plan ripened.

Meanwhile, Abhirami returned with a negative reply. At once did Udayamarthandan remove a valuable necklace from Ravi Varma's chest and hand it over to Abhirami, with instructions that she should either try to obtain Karpakavalli's consent with that costly bribe, or unobservedly throw it in a corner of her room and silently get out.

Most unwillingly, yet most punctiliously, Abhirami did what she had been, in a way, compelled to do. Failing again to obtain Karpakavalli's consent, she furtively dropped the jewel in her room and went away.

Hark! The hue and cry of Theft! O! The

Royal Chest was broken! A valuable necklace was missing! And it was found in Karpakavalli's room!

Arrested, therefore, Karpakavalli was and removed to the distant, lonely village of Yenadimangalam. Naturally did she burst into the following soliloquy :—

ஆஹா! துயரக் கோடுமுடி கண்டேன்! இதுதானா உலக வாழ்க்கை? இதை நான் நினைத்தால், இதுகாறும் சுவர்க்கத்தல்லோ இருந்தேன். பதக்கம் திருடினேனோ? நான் ஒரு அரசக்கன்னிகையோ? அரசேது? எனக்குச் சாமான்னியர் பெறுந் தன்வயந்தானேது? அதுதான் பொறுத்தேன்; போரிற் சிறையுண்டாலும், ஒருவருக்கு மான முளதாம்; அந்தப் பேறும் எனக்கிலையோ? திருட்டோ? இரவிவர்மனை நினைத்து என்னை நானே திருடிக் கொண்டேன், அல்லது, வேறு திருட்டறியேன். என்னையும் தந்தையையும் இங்கே சிறைவைத்தோனை எனக்குச் சேரலனென்று நினையாது, அவன் அன்பை நினைத்தேன். அதற்குக் கைமாறிதுவோ? உண்மைக்குச் சம்பளமோ இது?

With a view to carry his secret plan on to the very end, Udayamarthandan presented the necklace, which had been recovered from Karpakavalli, to Paramarti, in anticipation of her promised help to him. What was the *promised help*? Did Paramarti's final reply, viz :— நீர் போம் வழிக்கே நான் வருவேன், amount to that 'promised help'?

Surely it did; for, it meant 'I shall abide by your plan'. That was, at any rate, how Udayamarthandan understood it; and hence his presentation of the necklace to Paramarti.

. But, be it noted, the same *final reply* admitted of another interpretation, viz: "I shall go the same way as you do, namely, to Yenadimangalam. In this sense, Paramarti meant that both Udayamarthandan and herself could go, alike, to Yenadimangalam, but might carry out the secret plan, each in his or her own way.

Thus Paramarti's 'final reply', like Yudhistira's statement ('Asvathama was killed') admitted of two interpretations,—one favouring Udayamarthandan, and the other, herself.

How far was Paramarti justified in uttering such *Half truth* is indeed an interesting and instructive question, which we shall discuss later on.

Now, both Udayamarthandan and Paramarti repaired, alike, to Yenadimangalam,—the former, with a retinue and a Purohit for the purpose of (even forcibly) effecting the long-projected marriage, but the latter, with Kutralam and a set of Maravars, (who were required to lie in wait), for the purpose of (even for-

cibly) preventing that marriage from taking place. Another friend of Karpakavalli, *Kayarkanni* by name, joined Paramarti now at Yenadimangalam, as per Paramarti's own instructions.

Urge the question of marriage at Yenadimangalam, Udayamarthandan did; but, even here, he was repulsed. So he sought to compass it by force.

At once, the Maravars rushed in and drove away Udayamarthandan and his followers, and also conducted Karpakavalli and her two friends safely to the limits of Travancore, where they were required to stop.

The three maidens proposed to start on a pilgrimage to the various shrines in the north. With a view to ensure their safety on the way, Karpakavalli and Paramarti disguised themselves as males; while, Kayarkkanni accompanied them as their sister.

Here ends the third Act.

The three maidens pursued their journey, but were, in the middle, hard pressed for money. Paramarti pawned the necklace she had with her to one Soolapani Chetty through his agent Pichandy for £ 400, which sum the Chetty did not part with, without previously deducting from it his interest money at 2½% *plus* the com-

mission money at 4% and again plus £ 1/- to Sandhi Ganapathi temple on the ground of custom! With the balance on hand, Paramarti moved on with her two friends, reached a forest at Conjeevaram and sojourned there for a time.

Meanwhile, Soolapani Chetty and Pichandy fell out with each other about the commission; and the latter, in his disappointment, asked the police to arrest the former, lest that former should sell, even before the stipulated time, the pawned jewel and misappropriate the proceeds to himself. The police lost no time in arresting Soolapani Chetty and keeping him in custody, awaiting trial.

In the North, Ravi Varma defeated the Chola King and took possession of his country. On the advice of his minister, he decided to crown himself as the King of Chera, Chola and Pandyan territories and constitute Conjeevaram as his new Capital. With a view to give the occasion a befitting grandeur, he sent invitations to all his friends, especially to Udayamarthandan and Ilayaperumal. In his letter to the former, he asked him to bring with him Karpakavalli and her father.

It was at this juncture that the police brought Soolapani's case before Ravi Varma's

notice and handed over the pawned jewel to the King, who at once recognised it to be his own. But he felt puzzled as to how it found its way into the Chetty's hands. He held an inquiry. The Chetty claimed the jewel as his own family property; while his Agent deposed that it was a pawned property.

"Where is the pawner?" asked the king. No satisfactory answer forthcoming, he adjourned the case for further inquiry and remanded both the Chetty and his Agent to Jail.

Suddenly, the King got a letter from Udayamarthandan, in which the latter accepted the coronation invitation, but added a sting that Karpakavalli had run away with a set of Maravars, which served as *a suggestio falsi* of elopement.

O! How piteously the King lamented the loss of his beloved one; and O! O! how naturally the lament resulted in a wholesale contempt for womankind. Listen:—

இதுவிந்தை ! முழுமோசம் !
உலகம் தன்நிலை பிறழ்ந்ததுவோ ? விண்ணும் நரகும்
கலந்தனவோ ? இஃதேன்ன ? உதமார்த்தாண்டா,
இப்போல்லாத செய்தி சொல்லவோ ஓலைவிட்டாய் ?

ஓஹோ, கற்பகவல்லி, காதல் மணவல்லி,
மறவருடன் போய்விட்டனளோ? தேடியும் அவளைக்
காணக் கிடைக்கவில்லையோ? இந்தப் பழிதருஞ்சொல்
காதுக் கோருகட்டாரி, நெஞ்சுக் கோரம்பு,
காதலை வெட்டும் வாள். அதை நம்பக்கூடவில்லை.
அத்தனை மாண்புகள் இத்தனை எளிதாய் அழிவனவோ?
ஆனால், உண்மையனன்றோ உதயமார்த்தாண்டன்?
இதுகாறும் அலனென் றெண்ணுதற்கு ஓரிறையளவும்
சாட்சியமில்லை. நேற்றுவரை மெய்யுடையானை
இன்று பொய்யனெனவோ? மெய்யே; அவன் சொன்ன
திது மெய்யே. போய் சொல்லி என்னை ஏமாற்றத்
துணிவானோ, நாளைப் பகல் போல் உள்ளனவெல்லாம்
வெளிப்படுமென் றறிந்தும்? ஆ! இல்லை, இல்லை, அந்தோ
மாதரை நம்பப்படுமோ? அவர் எதுதான் துணியார்?
பொன்னுக்காகத் தம் உயிர்க்கிணையாம் மானத்தை
விற்றுப் பழிகொள்வார்; உயர்வும், இழிவும், ஆசை
யுற்றால், பாரார்; உற்றவர் சொல்லும் நல்வார்த்தை
விழலென்றெறிவார்; கொடுமை புரியவு மஞ்சார்; ஓர்
தெய்வ முண்டென நினையாது அவரை நம்பினோரைக்
கைவிடுவார்; கையறியாதவனைக் கைப்பிடிப்பார்;
கன்னெஞ்சப் புன்வஞ்சப் பாவிகள்; அவரில்லாது
உலகமுமில்லை, உலகிற் பெருங் கலகமு மில்லை.

Here ends the fourth Act.

This lamentation Ravi Varma had, however, to stop. For Udayamarthandan and Vira Pandyan stationed their combined armies at

Conjeevaram and offered war to the King. Ravi Varma sent his minister and commander to wage that war through.

But himself and Mathangan disguised themselves as ordinary travellers and set out to trace the history of the necklace, and if possible, to find out its pawner. In so doing, they happened to go to the very forest wherein the three maidens had been sojourning. Here, the two disguised sets of people met; and at once Mathangan fell in love with Kayarkanni and was lost in the admiration of her beauty. But the disguised King (briefly D. K) and the disguised Meikondal (briefly D. M.) fell into the following interesting conversation.

D. M:—Any new news here?

D. K:—Yes; a certain merchant wanted to sell a necklace, when the police arrested him on suspicion and took him before the King.

D. M:—What was his offence?

D. K:—It seems he was not the owner of the jewel.

D. M:—Did he then steal it?

D. K:—No; it had been pawned to him by some one.

D. M:—What is the name of the merchant?
D. K:—Soolapani.
D. M:—O!
D. K-—What does your O! mean?
D. M:—Did that fellow dare to sell that jewel?
D. K:—Yes; what of that?
D. M:—That jewel is mine.
D. K:—Yours! How?
D. M:—It was I that pawned it to him.
D. K:—Is the jewel your own?
D. M:—No; it fell into my hands.
D. K:—If it did so by lawful means, go and lodge a complaint before the King tomorrow; and your case will be taken up forthwith.
D. M·—I shall do so; any further news here?
D. K:—Udayamarthandan attacked the King with an army.
Disguised Karpakavalli:—Ah! Villain! Did that wretch dare to attack even the King? Was it not enough that he had tried to decoy a beloved one?
D. K:—Whose *beloved one*?
Disguised Karpakavalli:—The King's.
D. M:—By God's grace, that King's 'beloved one' is now safe on account of the help rendered by a set of Maravars.

D. K:—(Aside)—O! I now understand why Udayamarthandan wrote to me that my *beloved one* had run away with a set of Maravars. O! what a huge deception he tried to practise on me.

At this stage, Ilayaperumal stepped in; and the company parted. The maidens went by one way; while the rest, by another way; but all repaired to Conjeevaram.

Meanwhile, Udayamarthandan was defeated, and taken prisoner along with Koopakakkottan and others; while Vira Pandyan fled to the woods.

Now Ravi Varma resumed the trial of the 'Necklace case'. The maidens and Ilayaperumal were present on one side, while the accused and the recently taken prisoners on the other side. The whole story of the necklace was then unravelled; and Udayamarthandan's *guilt* and Karpakavalli's *innocence* were proved by Meikondal's searching questions. Whereupon, the King pronounced sentences upon the three culprits, Udayamarthandan, Koopakakkottan, and Soolapani Chetty.

Ilayaperumal was rewarded with the Kingdom of Travancore for his faithfulness, with Mathangan as his minister.

Soon triple marriages were celebrated between (1) Ravi Varma and Karpakavalli (2) Ilayaperumal and Meikondal and (3) Mathangan and Kayarkanni.

Finally, the King's coronation followed. Here ends the fifth Act, and here closes the *Play*.

The pivotal point, round which the whole Play of *Ravi Varmā* revolves, may be set forth thus.

Obsession of one kind or another it is that often endangers life or, at least, its career. The obsession of Wolsey, for instance, was greed; that of Coriolanus, pride; that of Macbeth, ambition; that of Othello, jealousy; and that of Hamlet, wisdom carried too far.

Similarly, the obsession of Ravi Varma was credulousness carried too far. In this respect, King Ravi Varma resembled King Lear. For, just as the latter believed the words of his first two daughters on their face value; so also, the former believed Udayamarthandan's words on their face value. Both of them fell, alike, victims to treachery.

The Play of Ravi Varma would have ended as a Tragedy, but for the intervention

of Meikondal who saved the King from his catastrophic situation.

Vira Pandyan was a right-minded man; but why did he suddenly join Udayamarthandan and attack the King? Because, like Macbeth, he deteriorated under the influence of a rogue Koopakakkottan, whose subtle method to level down Vira Pandyan's mentality is worth noticing.

Vira Pandyan:—Ravi Varma is no foe of mine.

Koopakakkottan:—Nor is he your friend; else would he have gone to the Cbola country without first seeking your help, or at least, without the courtesy of paying bis respects to you?

V. P:—True, he did not mind me at all.

K. K:—Elated by his previous success in battle, he is now puffed up with pride.

V. P:—O! I am very sorry I did not help Kulasekaran then.

K. K:—Your present help to Udayamarthandan will be tantamount to having helped Kulasekaran.

V. P:—Well.

A side-light this *Play* throws on the subject

of *Friendship.* True friends are defined to be *Partners in cares,* and the well known couplet:—

உடுக்கை யிழந்தவன் கைபோல வாங்கே
இடுக்கண் களைவதா நட்பு.

illustrates the definition of such *a true friend.* Meikondal may be held up as a veritable example. For, did she not say:—

என் அருமைப் பெருமாட்டி சிறையிலிருக்க, இந்தக்
கட்டைக்கு
மணம் புரியக் குறையொன்றிருக்குமோ?

Before taking leave of this *Play,* I shall, as promised in page 158 above, take up the question of "How far Paramarti was justified in uttering the *half-truth* she did", and discuss it as briefly as I can.

In the first place, that '*half-truth*' assumes many forms, such as, diplomacy, expediency, mental reservation, exaggeration, or ambiguity under one and all of which there runs an undercurrent of juggling friends' keeping the word of promise to the ear but breaking it to the hope.

While, this paltry paltering Shakespeare attributed to an Apparition,[1] Sri Lakshmana

Cf, Macbeth—Act IV Sc. 2.

Pillai did it to a Sanyasini![1] and mark! the great Vyasa to the truth-speaking Yudhistira[2]. Should, then, the Sanyasini and Yudhistira, (let alone the Apparition), be arraigned and condemned as downright liars or honorably acquitted? Let us first hear both the sides of the question.

The divine Commandment of *Speak truth* has been held up as an inexorable law for the conduct of humanity all over the world. For, Truth is the very bond of Society, without which it must cease to exist and dissolve into anarchy or chaos. It is said that, even among thieves, a sort of truth prevails and that they agree to cheat the whole world except themselves. Otherwise, they will have to share the fate of Soolapani Chetty and his Agent Pichandy. It was probably in this sense that Sir Thomas Browne asked, "Do the devils lie?" and answered: "No; for, even hell could not otherwise subsist."

To show that no consideration, not even the consideration of death, can justify the sacrifice of truth, which ought to be sovereign in all the relations of life, we have two typical illus-

1 See page 157.
2 Cf. Mahabharatha—Dronaparva Ch. 191, Sl. 54.

trations,—one historical and the other puranical.

First, in the battle of Waterloo in 1815, Wellington stood in sore need of Blucher's help. But Blucher's army had to pass through bad roads; and its march was therefore heavy. Nevertheless, Blucher ordered his troops to march quickly on.

"It is impossible; it can't be done;" was the answer.

"You may say it can't be done; but it *must* be done. For, I have promised Wellington,—*promised*, do you hear? You would'nt have me break my word." Forthwith it was done.

Secondly, in an inquiry that took place in the Durbar of Indra, as to whom the palm should be given for *truthfulness*, King Harischandra was unanimously chosen for that special honor. Therewith Viswamitra felt chagrined. By his machination, Harischandra lost his Kingdom and his son. Yet, he would not swerve an inch from his true path. He was further punished with the separation of his wife, whom, —when later on met,—he proceeded to kill for the sake of truth. At that juncture, Viswamitra

appeared, unravelled the whole mystery, restored Harischandra to his original regal position and enabled him, as before, to enjoy the company of his wife and son.

Hence, special stress has ever been laid on the statement—"There is no Dharma higher than Truth[1];" and the Mahabharatha delights to reiterate it, off and on, in its own characteristic way thus:—"When the respective merits of a 1000 Yagnas and of Truth were weighed in the scale, it was found that truth weighed more[2]."

So far, we have considered the *General Rule* regarding Truth. In an innocent age, if any, this 'General Rule' might have worked tolerably well.

But the moment when persons of jesting Pilate's type raised the question of "*What is Truth?*" the whole fabric of the *Rule* received a rude shock; and fierce combatants arose more than staunch adherents. And what was worse, most of those combatants

"Went wrong, with an ingenious skill,
Bent the straight rule to their own crooked will

1 Cf. Mahabharatha, Saatiparva Ch. 160, Sl. 24.
2 Cf. Ibid. Adiparva, Ch. 99, Sl. 31
" Santiparva, Ch. 160, Sl. 26
" Anusasanaparva, Ch. 110, Sl. 29.

And, with a clear and shining lamp supplied
First put it out; then took it as a guide[1]."

The very absence of the definition of *Truth* and the consequent ambiguity of the Commandment led to different interpretations which culminated in horrible persecutions. Why else should Bruno be burnt alive; Galileo imprisoned; Ockham exiled; Spinoza excommunicated; Harvey stigmatised; Socrates poisoned; Christ crucified; St: Ramanujan driven to Mysore; and Kamakoti Pitam kicked into Kumbakonam?

A typical on laught on the Commandment is found in Mahabharatha, Karnaparva, Chapter 72, according to which a hunter, named Balaka, (who lived by the animals he killed), attained *Moksha* or heaven; while a Brahmin, named Kowsika, (who saw a set of innocent people concealing themselves in a place known to him and who, when a gang of highway robbers rushed in and asked him for the whereabouts of those people, spoke the truth and thus exposed them to slaughter), got into *Naraka* or Hell.

This *typical onslaught* forces us to clean our slates and find out the real reason as to

1 Cf. Cowper's *Progress of Error.*

why an animal-killer entered heaven and a truth-speaker, hell.

No doubt, Mr. Sidgwick[1] threw a hint and Mr. Mill[2] approved of it, viz;—"We do not think that truth ought always to be told to children, madmen or invalids, or by advocates; and we are not sure that we are bound to tell it to enemies, or robbers, or even to persons who ask questions which they know they have no right to ask."

But it was Mahabharatha, Santiparva, Chapter 109, Sloka 34 that laid down an un-ambiguous,—nay, a most positive-Ruling on the point; viz; "Deal with others in the same way as they deal with you. With fraud should the fraudulent be defeated; but with candour, should the candid be approached."

Did not Bharavi piously follow Vyasa in his Kiratarjuniam. "Those who do not meet fraud by fraud are indeed dull-headed and (naturally) experience defeat.[3]"

A very hard *Ruling* indeed; and hence Vyasa sought to explain it in both the Karna and Santi Parvas thus:—" To those that

1 Cf. Sidgwick's *Method of Ethics* page 355.
2 Cf, J. S. Mill's *Utilitarianism*. Ch. II. pages 33—34.
3 Cf, Bharavi's *Kiratarjuniam*.

unjustly desire to plunder another's property, do not speak the truth, that is, do not tell them where the property lies, even when you know it. That is Dharma. If you can escape without speaking to them, then do not speak under any circumstances. But if it is necessary to speak or if, by not speaking, any suspicion is likely to be roused, then, telling a lie has been found by mature consideration to be much better than speaking the truth. To thieves, therefore, you may freely—nay, are bound to—break your promise, however solemnly made.[1] Indeed, lies are not lies, if uttered in joke, in love, in respect of marriage, or in case of danger to life or property.[2] "

Both the *ruling* and its *explanation*, the orthodox puritans are, I fear, likely to feel as a downright bomb-throw and raise a big hue and cry against them. It is therefore necessary to remind them that the so-called *bomb-throw* was the act of no less a personage than the great Vyasa as well as to rivet their attention upon the motif of truth, that is, upon the question of "Why should man be truthful at all?" which, if answered, is calculated to

1 Cf. Karnaparva, Ch. 72; Santiparva, Ch. 109.
2 Cf. Adiparva, Ch. 76. Sl. 24.

enable those puritans to take a perspective view of the whole question and cease complaining.

This point of *motif* I have already referred to.[1] It can, however, bear repetition. More than once did Vyasa suggest, "The motif of truth is to help, not hinder, the God-planned evolution of the world and that such good persons as are engaged in that 'helping' work must be protected at any cost.[2]" Even a lie, uttered for (or in connection with) such protection will have the efficacy of truth[3].

Appropriately, in this connection, did Mr. B G. Tilak observe:—"The Law of truth is not confined to speech; and the conduct, which leads to the benefit of all, cannot be looked upon as objectionable, merely on the ground that the vocal expression is untruthful. Where there is a conflict between *Verbal Truth* (i. e. truthful speech,) and *Practical Truth* (i. e. the benefit of Humanity), the wise men have permitted that the situation may be saved by telling a lie, if, from the practical point of view, that is unavoidable[4]."

1 See pages 169—170 above
2 Cf. Karnaparva, Ch. 72, Sl. 58—59; Santiparva, Ch. 108, Sl. 20
3 Cf. Karnaparva, Ch. 72, Sl. 63
4 Cf. Tilaks's *Gita Rahasya* Vol I pages 47 and 51

That was why Sir Harry Wotton significantly described an Ambassador to be "an honest man sent to lie abroad for the benefit of his country[1]." That was why the very God Vishnu abetted the employment of loopholes to kill Vrithra[2], and directly employed them to kill Hiranyakasipu[3]. That was, again, why Lord Krishna advised Arjuna to break his vow with a cunning interpretation thereof[4]. That was, further again, why Arjuna himself resorted to the stratagem of employing Sikhandi to defeat Bhishma[5]. That was, above all, why the very avatar of Sri Rama abetted Sumantra to utter a deliberate falsehood to King Dasaratha, *viz.* 'Your command of *Stop* was not heard by me[6]; and that was, finally, why the Third Apparition, Yudhistira and Paramarti uttered each a Half-truth.

Instinctively, at this stage, did Mr. Tilak exhibit his Indian characteristics by observing, "The ancients of India looked upon the moral laws of truth as immutable under all circum-

1 Cf. Smiles' *Character* page 206.
2 Cf. Udyogaparva, Ch. 10.
3 Cf. Sabhaparva Ch. 46.
4 Karnaparva Ch. 72 Sl. 83.
5 Cf. Bhishmaparva Chs 107 116, 117, 119.
6 Cf. Ramayana.

stances, and they therefore considered the speaking of untruth, (as mentioned above), as a sin to a certain extent from the next world point of view and prescribed relative penances[1]. Hence Yudhistirâ entered Hell, though for a very short time[2]; and Arjuna had the mortification of being defeated by his own son Babruvahana[3]; and even Sri Rama had to punish himself with a second separation from Sita.[4] "

Since, in the play *Ravi Varma*, Paramarti's *motif* was to protect the innocent Karpakavalli from the wiles of the roguish Udayamarthandan, her *half-truth* was perfectly justifiable. She must therefore be honorably acquitted from this worldly point of view; and a penance might absolve her even from the other worldly point of view. This positian is backed up by Rom. III. 8. "Do evil that good may come."

To proceed. Besides the works mentioned above, Sri Lakshmana Pillai delivered a series of lectures on various occasions, collected and even published them in book form with the title of *Essays in* 1918. They treated, amidst other

1 Cf. Tilak's *Gita Rahasya* Vol I page 51.
2 Cf Dronaparva Ch. 191; Swargarohanaparva, Ch. 3.
3 Cf Asvamedhikaparva, Ch. 82, Sl. 8, 9, 10.
4 Cf. Ramayana.

things, of Fate, Responsibility, Good and Evil, Nerve-Force and Worship. In respect of Fate, he agreed with Dr: Tagore and gave the final victory to Fate itself. His *Responsibility* seems to be more or less a counterpart of Mill's *Liberty*. *Good and Evil* are in our Pillai's views alike necessary in this world; and most of the evils, such as, death, hunger, disease, pain and fear are only disguised ones and go only to justify the ways of God to man. As for *Worship*, his view seems to be "Service of the sentient world is Worship of God." Finally, *Nerve-Force* has been his pet subject; and not a day would pass without his referring to that subject to each and every one of his friends he came across. I very well remember his pointed reference to it, during a morning walk with him, on the Triplicane Beach Road in 1934, as well as his earnest advice that I should recoup my nerve power by making use of Dr. Lalor's *Phosphodyne*. Skilfully did he introduce the same subject into his *Ravi Varma*.[1]

(4) Musical.

Our Pillai's unique Kambodi song of என்ன செய்தாலும், meaning:—

1. See page 154.

"Whatever thou may'st do, I'll not
Leave thee, the only hold I've got,"

which was composed at the fag-end of the preceding period, created, during the present period, so much furore in the whole of Trivandrum that almost every street of the town reverberated with the song or, at least, with the whistling of it.

By 1903, Sri Lakshmana Pillai's songs swelled to a decent number; and all of them became so popular that they were requisitioned, off and on, by societies as well as individuals.

The Trivandrum Union Club set the ball a-rolling. At once Mr. Hunt arranged for Sri Pillai's party in connection with an *At-Home* to the Law Students. Messrs. Ponnambalam Pillai, (Excise Commissioner), P. Ramakrishnier (Dewan Peishkar), and Vedadrisadasa Mudaliar (Ex. High Court Judge)–each of them organised a special party to hear him. Later on, Dewan Mr. V. P. Madhava Rao heard him and observed: "I never knew that Pillai was such a finished musician." When, again, at Mr. Nagamiah's residence, Mr. Kutten Pillai (Harmonium Player) and Mr. Rama Iyer (Violin) were playing together, in their respective instruments, a Bhairavi song ((துன்பம் துடைத்த), Mr.

Madhava Rao was so struck with its beauty that he asked: "Which song of Thyagaraja's is this?" Justice Govinda Pillai, who was sitting by, answered: This is not Thyagaraja's; its composer is Sri Lakshmana Pillai, who is here now." Mr. Madhava Rao smiled and said: 'Is it so? I know him[1]."

On two occasions, Sri Lakshmana Pillai had the privilege of singing before H. H. Sri Mulam Thirunal, Maharajah of Travancore, who said: "Such music has not been heard for several years." Even the then connoisseur of music, Mr. Kerala Varma (Valia Koil Tampuran) observed, on hearing him, that his style of singing was on a par with that of Coimbatore Raghavier.

Nor were Sri Lakshmana Pillai's activities confined to mere singing. He delivered two memorable lectures on music, viz, (1) Travancore Music and Musicians and (2) Tiagayya—the one under the auspices of the Law College Association and the other, of the Government Lecture Committee. These two lectures were duly included in his Essays.

When, under the presidency of the then Chief Justice, Mr. T. Sadasiva Iyer, Sri Laksh-

mana Pillai placed before his audience a galaxy of the Travancore musicians, the President remarked: "I find in the list of the musicians, so ably prepared, one serious omission; and that is the name of Sri Lakshmana Pillai himself." Again his Tiagayya's *Life* evinces a welcome departure from the dull, routine enumeration of the Bard's songs, said to have been sung in this or that place, *plus* some traditional account about them, with which alone the catchpenny publications filled the markets. I publicly record here that it was Sri Pillai's *Tiagayya* that inspired me to write my own *Life of Thiagaraja* in 1927.

At the instance of the Travancore Government, Sri Pillai helped Mr. Nagamiah and Mr. Fox Strangways with information on music which the former incorporated into his State Manual of 1906 and the latter, into his *Music of Hindustan* of 1914. But both the recipients of Sri Pillai's information were too proud to be imitative, though right, and preferred to be original, though wrong. For Mr. Nagamiah preferred the wrong year of 1842 to the right one of 1847 as Thiagaraja's date of death; and similarly Mr. Fox Strang-

ways preferred the wrong year of 1843 to to the right one of 1838 as the date of the grand meeting between Thyagaraja and Govinda Marar. But, while the former gracefully acknowledged his indebtedness to Sri Lakshmana Pillai for the help received, the latter was positively discourteous and avoided his name altogether.

Till 1918, Sri Pillai enjoyed the honor and privilege of issuing *Music-Proficiency-Certificates* which were accepted by the Education Department for the appointment of Music Tutors in the various Girls' Schools of the State. In 1918, with a view to draw up a Syllabus and prescribe a standard of proficiency in music for the Bhagavatars to be employed in the Girls' Schools and to conduct the necessary tests for the purpose, a Music Board of Experts was constituted; and our Pillai was appointed a member thereof.

It was during this period that some of the more important musicians of South India, viz, Govindaswamy Pillai of Violin fame, Sakharam Rao of Gotevadya fame, Alagianambi of Mridhanga fame, Konerirajapuram Vythinatha Iyer of Vocal music fame, and Bidaram

Krishnappa of Mysore, visited Trivandrum, met Sri Pillai, heard him, and recognised him to be a bright luminary in the musical firmament.

Even a foreigner, Rev. H. A. Popley, was so much struck with our Pillai's works that he delighted to quote from them in all his discourses, and later on wrote, "Sri Lakshmana Pillai, we are thinking of publishing a small book of lyrics suitable for teaching in Christian Girls' Schools. Could you let me have a number of your lyrics, say, about a dozen, which you think suitable. There are practically no other Non-Christians who write such high ethical lyrics as yourself and so full of poetry; and I am very anxious to include a few of them in the book".

Be it noted, in fine, that—except the singing of the songs already composed, the delivery of lectures, the issuing of music certificates, and some such general activities in the music-field—Sri Lakshmana Pillai did not compose any song, of his own accord, between 1906 and 1920.

Under compulsion, however, he did compose, even in this period of 14 years, but only a very few songs, such as:—

1. தாயே நின் சரணன்றி in Bilahari which means,

"Mother, no refuge I possess
But Thine; Thou knowest none the less."

composed, in 1904, as a piece of prayer for the life of his son, Ramakrishnan, who was then a child in swaddling cloth and who was shivering from fever and convulsions;

2. நின்னாமம் உச்சரித்தால் in Nilambari which means,

"If I do chant thy sacred name, would I
Forsaken be, and past pray'rs fruitless lie?",

composed in 1905, at the persistent request of a Malayalam poet, Mr. Nilakanta Pillai;

3. சங்கம் வாழ்க in Kalyani which means

"Long live Tamilar Sangam".

composed in 1915, at the request of the organisers of the Sangam;

(4) வந்ததே யூறப்பில் in Nadhanamakriya and சொல்லுக்கடங்காத in Thenpangu tune—both of which were composed in 1916 and formed the outcome of the German war that raged then.

Barring these few, Sri Pillai did not, as a matter of fact, compose of his own accord any song during the long period of fourteen years between 1906 and 1920'. Why?

Sri Pillai accounted for it by telling us

that the death of his favourite pupil, Appakudam, stunned him into stupor and that the heavy work he had, as Account (or Treasury) Officer, left him hardly a moment to attend to anything else. Possible.

Yet, there was another reason which should have lain imbedded in his subconsciousness. Recalling to mind his official career during this period, the reader will readily understand that Sri Pillai continuously smarted under the "severest trial" of his life, which began on or about 1906 and ended with 1920, and which resulted in Jedwood Justice; and he, therefore, must have addressed himself thus:—

> "No more my soul a charm in music finds;
> Music has charms alone for peaceful minds."

(5) *Humanitarian.*

The coming of Swami Rudrakotiswara from Madras enabled our Pillai to carry out his long-cherished object of starting a *Vegetarian Society* at Trivandrum on March 27, 1909. And exactly six months hence, Sri Pillai delivered a well-thought-out lecture on the *Philosophy of Vegetarianism*, passages from which were, later on, quoted even in the

"Vegetarian Messenger" of Manchester. This lecture was first published in 1912 at Alleppey and was, after a few years, adopted, at the instance of Mr. T. Sadasiva Iyer (afterwards, Madras High Court Judge), for propagandist purposes by the Madras Vegetarian Society. We find it now included in his *Essays*.

Again, opposite to our Pillai's house at Poonen Road, there was a temple, worshipped by the lower classes of people, at which there used to be festivals in March, and a number of sheep used to be slaughtered for sacrifice. When in March 1915, Sri Pillai found the slaughter was going on and saw the headless bodies of the slaughtered sheep carried through the public street, he could not endure the gruesome sight; and so, he rushed into the temple premises and, in the presence of the devotees, preached against the cruelty and sin of conducting animal sacrifices in the name of religion and exhorted them to give up the custom forthwith. The slaughter stopped at that centre.

CHAPTER V.

PERIOD OF RETIREMENT.

Even this period may consist of all the usual headings, except *Official*, viz, (1) Domestic (2) Literary (3) Musical and (4) Humanitarian.

(1) Domestic.

On May 2, 1924, Sri Pillai's *Shashtiabdapurti* (completion of the 60th year of life) was celebrated on a grand scale. Most of the important officers of the State, including the Dewan (Mr. T. Raghavaiah) attended it. There was music by Mr. Nilakanta Bhagavathar and others. Congratulatory verses came pouring in. One of them by Mr. C. S. Padmanabha Pillai may be quoted here:—

> "The Stage, the third in life, that opes to thee
> Today, with signs of greater sanctity,
> Inviteth thee to a saintlier life, that waits
> To embrace the soul that shunneth the early baits.
> A flower from bud to bloom in sixty years,
> In beauty and fragrance grown midst summer's cheers,
> Art thou, that spreadst thy use in diverse ways,

Unswayed by caste or creed or pelf or place.
May Lord of all, adored by all mankind,
Bestow on thee long life and health combined,
To work His will down here, and help to raise
The helpless, heeding neither frown nor praise."

On May 4, 1930, Sri Pillai fell ill of paratyphoid fever, which prevented him from attending the *All-India* Saliar Social Conference at Vadasery, opened by the then Dewan Mr. V. S. Subramanya Iyer, who having heard of Pillai's illness, asked the whole audience to stand up and pray for the patient's speedy recovery.

Recover Sri Pillai soon did. But in the next three succeeding years (1931—32—33), his second daughter Minakshi, his second wife Devaki amma and his first son Ramakrishnan (the Tennis champion) did not recover from the illness which attacked them but succumbed thereto.

The calamities did not, however, unnerve our Pillai. For to quote his own words, "The souls in their wearisome journey through time, carry with them the seeds of their past doings and experiences which shape their destinies in life. The extent of their lives is determined, not in terms of years, but by the measure of fulfil-

ment of their particular missions in this world. Viewed in this light, we can see where our personal responsibility ends and God's own work begins. This thought has a sustaining power of inestimable value, even in the face of the severest vicissitudes of life."

(2) *Literary.*

Just two months after Sri Pillai's retirement, Dewan Mr. Krishnan Nair had an occasion to speak of him thus: "Sri Lakshmana Pillai has already achieved remarkable distinction as an author and composer. Now that he is free from the trammels of public service, I am sure that he will use all his leisure to the advancement of his mother-tongue and shed additional lustre thereon."

This suggestion of the Dewan, Sri Pillai took up in right earnest and, with a view to advance his mother tongue (Tamil), toured throughout Travancore, lectured on the need for the development of the Tamil Language and Literature, organised the Travancore Tamilian Sangam, and started a Journal, called *Pothunalam*, to voice the requirements of the Tamilians of Travancore. The agitation thus begun gained,

with the co-operation of the Popular Assembly, considerable strength and finally resulted in the issue of a Government Order Dis. No. 105 of 1923, according to which all the existing Malayalam Departmental schools in the Tamil taluqs were converted into Tamil ones, wherever the Tamil speaking pupils formed the preponderating majority. In special localities, where there was scope for a Malayalam as well as a Tamil school, as at Kottar, both the schools were maintained independently or both the sections were kept up in the same school.

The numerous Tamil Conferences held during the period, at various places such as Tinnevelly, Tuticorin, Punalur, Satur, and Trivandrum, all of which our Pillai attended and over some of which he presided, expatiated upon the glory of the Tamils and made even a stirring appeal for getting it back.

Two works Sri Pillai was able to publish in this period. The first work was *Hints from Nature* (இயற்கைக்குறிப்பு) which appeared in 1931. It is a short poem serving as an introduction to the wide fields of Evolution and Biology. Gravitation, Life's first appearance, Amphibious Creatures, the Struggle for Existence, the Appearance of Man, Creatures and

their classification,—these are some of the subjects treated of therein. The second work was *Alaya Tirappu* (ஆலயத்திறப்பு). It is also a poem, in *Nondichindu* metre, composed in response to an inner urge of the author to express his unbounded admiration of the Epoch-making Temple Entry Proclamation of H. H. the Maharajah of Travancore. After tracing the Royal genealogy and describing in brief the deplorable condition of the Depressed classes, the author summarises the reasons for the Proclamation and closes the poem with the visit and observations on the Proclamation of Mahatma Gandhi.

Besides these purely literary activities, Sri Pillai managed to find time to usefully engage himself in other activities as well—social, religious and even political.

The first two, viz, social and religious activities may be grouped together. On 23rd March 1927, Sri Pillai furnished answers to a questionairre issued by the President of the Unemployment Committee, viz, Mr. C. V. Chandrasekharan, M. A. on the problem of Unemployment among the educated classes of the State. In the Devasom Department of

the State, vast savings were effected every year to the tune of 5 lakhs of Rupees; and these savings have been merely swelling the Reserve Fund of the Department. Even after allowing a wide margin for such works as the construction of new temples, repairs, or additions to the old ones, a large balance would still be left. The interest that would accrue from this *Fund* might with advantage be utilised for Hindu religious propaganda under the supervision of the Devasom Department. What objection could there be in organising such an all-important work and thereby furnishing scope for the employment of graduates and under-graduates, as has been done by the Ecclesiastical Departments of one and all the Christian countries? Special examinations in Hindu Religious studies and tests of elocutionary powers might be prescribed to secure efficiency and the successful candidates alone be considered eligible for employment. Mr. Chandrasekharan recommended Sri Pillai's suggestions to the Government for acceptance There, the matter stands even now!

Two years hence, that is, in March 1929, a few prominent citizens of Tinnevelly gathered

together, framed a questionnaire and sent them to our Pillai for an answer. The questionnaire referred to Religion and began with, "Is Religion necessary for a civilisation which has virtue for its goal?"

Sri Pillai's answer was an emphatic *Yes.* 'A civilisation which has virtue for its goal cannot do without religion; for religion gives life to virtue by assuming *apriori* the existence of a Moral Governor of the Universe. Further, the masses cannot realise the utility of virtue in the abstract; and the conception of a Personal God or Moral Governor is an indispensable factor for their well-being.'

On 23rd February 1930, the Secretary of the Trivandrum Y.M.C.A. invited Sri Pillai to participate in a Round Table Religious Conference with Dr.E. Stanley Jones at the Y.M.C.A. buildings. Dr. Jones fought shy of the points raised by our Pillai and found it convenient to shelve them.

Sri Lakshmana Pillai's political activity began and ended with his membership in the Trivandrum Legislative Council from 1922 to 1924. His Budget speeches, coming as they did from a trained Accountant that he was, were invariably appreciated.

(3) *Musical.*

During this period, Sri Lakshmana Pillai composed a pretty large number of Songs, now printed in the second and third parts of his recently published book of Songs and taught them to a good lot of his disciples that came from various quarters and gathered round him. The following are some of his select disciples—Messrs. Krishnaier of Pathamadai, Ranganathier of Deekshithar Street, Appu Iyer of Fort, Trivandrum; Sthanu Sastri of Nagercoil, Sankunni Nair of Alleppey, Raman Kutti Nair of Haripad, Kuttan Pillai of Mavelikara, Subramonia Iyer of Palavangady, Guruswami Martanda Nadar of Agastiswaram, Padmanabha Iyengar, M. A. of Nagercoil, Nagaraja Rao (Law Student), Bhanumati Amma, M. A. (now, Music Lecturer, Queen Mary's College, Mylapore), Janaki Amma of Panamootil, Ammukutti Amma of Punalur, Bhavani of Thakazhi, Isvariam of Jaffna, Manoharam of Trivandrum, Mohanambal of Madras and last, not least, Srimati C. Saraswati Bai of Madras—the renowned Lady Bhagavatar and Katha performer.

In 1927, Sri Pillai was invited to take an

active part in the deliberations of the All India Music Conference held at Madras. When, later on, the Madras Music Academy was constituted, he was made a member of the Expert Committee, which position he holds even today. He was again one of the Vidwans invited for the inauguration function of the Raja Annamalai Music College at Chidambaram, which took place on May 11, 1929. And, later on, he was appointed as a member of the Examination Board connected with that College and, still later on, with the Madras University also.

Distinguished persons began to visit his house, such as, Mrs. Sarojini Devi, Mr. C.F. Andrews, Mr. K.T. Paul, Mr. Doraswami Iyer of Ernakulam and the organ-voiced Pandyan. Two of these visitors deserve special mention, viz, Messrs. Andrews and Pandyan.

On November 9,1922, Dr. Rabindranath Tagore arrived at Trivandrum, along with Mr. C.F. Andrews; and both went to the Guest House as State Guests and stayed there: When Sri Pillai went to meet the new visitors, he saw Messrs. Dewan Bahadur A. Govinda Pillai (Retired High Court Judge),

R. Krishna Pillai (Chief Secretary), C. Govinda Pillai (Dewan Peishkar) and others standing there and talking to Mr. Andrews. Mr. A Govinda Pillai introduced Sri Lakshmana Pillai to Mr. Andrews, who at once said: "This is the very person I wanted to see."

Mr. Andrews happened to have studied Sri Lakshmana Pillai's *Essays* and read two of them; (viz, *Travancorean Music and Musicians* and *Christ and Tiruvalluvar*) to Dr. Tagore in the train on their way to Mangalore for the latter's treatment. Both of them therefore had learnt to respect the author of the *Essays* and wanted to see him. When actually our Pillai met Dr. Tagore, the latter said he had already read most of his *Essays* and even gave a few particulars of his reading.

When a group photo of the members of the Reception Committee was taken, our Pillai was asked to take his seat next to Dr. Tagore on the left and Dewan Bahadur A. Govinda Pillai on the right. After the group-photo-taking was over, Dr. Tagore thanked Sri Lakshmana Pillai for the Music entertainment the latter had given the previous night and added, "The songs were excellant and your daughters sang well." Sri Pillai recorded in his

diary that, when *Engutrai* (எங்குற்ருய்) was sung, Dr. Tagore hummed it to himself.

Mr. Pandyan belonged to a branch of the Panchalamkurichi Zamindars' family. His full name was Nallappaswami Pandyan. He was a Muruga Bhakta musician of a devout type. He was a gifted singer, especially of Alapa, of a very high order. In fertility of imagination, in beauty and variety of combinations, in majesty of style, in a wonderful range of voice, and in all points that went to make up a great musician, Mr. Pandyan stood without a rival. This Pandyan met our Pillai on June 17, 1923, and so well impressed him with his singing that our Pillai presented a gold medal to the gifted singer and burst into a verse, viz:—

"நல்லப்பசாமி நளினகுரற் பாண்டியனை
வெல்லப் பண்யாரே விரித்திடுவார்—சொல்லின்
மயிலுக்கீடில்லை வடிவழகு, பாடுங்
குயிலுக்கீடில்லை குரல்."

It was from July 1940, that Sri Pillai found it possible to go to Madras and stay there for some time and propagate his *Songs*. Almost all the Madras Dailies, Weeklies, Monthlies—especially *Dinamani* and *Anandavikatan*—had the graciousness to promptly and

even prominently advertise our Pillai's arrival and stay in Madras as well as the purpose of his stay—so much so that, in the space of a few weeks, no less than three full-dressed public Demonstrations of his songs were given in Triplicane, Mylapore, and George Town, successfully by his Madras disciples Srimati. C. Saraswati Bai, Miss. M. S. Mohanambal, Miss Sarojini, and Messrs. Sthanu Sastri and Sons. The number of the learners of his songs tends to grow larger and larger in Madras.

(4) Humanitarian.

One of the first things that Sri Lakshmana Pillai wanted to carry out as soon as he was free from official turmoils was the starting of a Humanitarian movement embodied in the famous stanza of Coleridge:—

> "He prayeth best who loveth best
> All creatures, great and small;
> For the dear God who loveth us,
> He made and loveth all."

Accordingly, on July 18, 1920, a Humanitarian Society was established, especially when the Vegetarian Society he had started, in 1909, along with Swami Rudrakotisvara, collapsed.

It comprised two branches—Humanitarian and Vegetarian.

Mr. C. Raman Tampi (afterwards High Court Judge) wrote to our Pillai: "It gives me the highest pleasure to congratulate you on the inauguration of your Humanitarian scheme. There are very few in Travancore who have the power you possess, to inspire the soul. While in office, you endeavoured to do your duty conscientiously; and now in your retirement, you have chosen a hobby which, while giving exercise to your faculties, is destined to further the cause of the Humanitarian movement, which is the life and soul of Hinduism. I may assure you of my help and co-operation in your noble work."

Thenceforward, Sri Pillai wrote monthly tracts in English and Tamil and got them freely distributed broadcast. He toured throughout Travancore and preached against animal sacrifices, and even sang on the subject, so as to melt the hearts of the hearers.

At Mandacaud, in South Travancore, where, with the co-operation of Mr. K. S. Narayana Iyer and other members of the Humanitarian Society, he did intensive propaganda work

between the years 1921—1927 against the horrible animal sacrifices which used to be carried on there on a tremendous scale from time immemorial, signal success was gained, resulting in the complete cessation of such sacrifices.

Our Pillai's preaching—be it noted—did not go in vain. For, early in 1925, a Royal Proclamation of Her Highness the Maharani Regent was issued, stopping the Animal Sacrifices in all the Sircar Temples of the State, quite in the same manner as the gladiatorial combat was stopped in Rome by order of Honorius, in 402, as a result of an unknown old hermit's intervening between two fierce gladiators and giving up even his life, only to stop the shedding of innocent blood.

CHAPTER — VI

PORTRAIT UNVEILING.

One word more and I shall have done. That *word* has reference to the unveiling of Sri Lakshmana Pillai's Portrait.

It so happened that I had been to Trivandrum and stayed with Sri Pillai for the first 20 days of August 1933 and learnt a good lot of his songs. During my stay there, I was asked by the local branch of the Madras University Extension Lecture Board to deliver a lecture on Music. I agreed. Accordingly, on the evening of August 19, 1933, I delivered a lecture on *the Milestones of the Carnatic Music*, in the Maharajah's Women's College Hall, which was full to overflowing, there being, among those present, prominent officers, High Court Judges, Dewan Peiskars, Professors, Lawyers, Students of both sexes and Sangita Vidwans.

Since my *lecture* finally led to the unveiling of Sri Pillai's Portrait, which, with the permission of the Travancore Government, was

hung in the local Museum Library Hall, which was later on removed to the Travancore University Buildings, and which formed a crowning glory to all his noble activities, especially music, I choose to record the whole of my speech, here, as my humble tribute to my best friend on this side of the Sun,—Sri T. Lakshmana Pillai.

Milestones of the Carnatic Music.

"It is said that, to exhibit the exuberance of his joy, man shouts, or claps, or bounces. Can, then, the *shout* be said to be the origin of vocal music; the *clap*, of instrumental music; and the *bounce*, of dancing?

Anthropology teaches us that these three activities were resorted to by the primitive people mainly for the purpose of their daily supply of food. When those primitive people wanted the sun, or the wind, or the rain, or the animal-supply, they did not sit and pray, like the modern people, in a helpless mood, but proceeded to dance the sun-dance, the wind-dance, and so forth, as if those dances would enable them to realise their desires. Those dances were at first vague, but gradually rose

into artistic dances, which attracted the attention of the whole tribe.

At first, there was no division between the dancers and the spectators. All were dancers. As time went on, there arose a new element, called the spectators; and the dancing came to be thenceforward not only danced, but also watched from a distance. This new attitude of watching marked the difference between the ritualistic dance and the artistic dance. The dancers of the ritual had in their minds nothing but the food-supply, to induce the return of which they danced; while, the new spectators, who cut themselves loose from the immediate action of dancing and had therefore the time to think about it, learnt to look through the dancing and began to appreciate it, not as a food-supplier, but as an art in itself. Hence, the moment when the dance ceased to be merely ritualistic and came to be enjoyed as a dance, pure and simple, may be deemed to mark the origin of Art.

The same principle applies no less to music: Extremes of joy and sorrow, doubtless, produce singing. But, at first, the singing was involuntary and served merely to unburden the singer

of his feelings He was for a long time unconscious of the corresponding response which he unknowingly produced in the minds of his hearers. The moment, however, he became conscious of the response produced, a new delight dawned in his mind. Thenceforward, he sang, not alone to unburden himself of his feelings, but also to express them in such a way as to produce corresponding response in the hearers. It was therefore with this conscious desire to express one's feelings with a view to produce a particular response that Music originated.

The first phase of music that ever appeared on the face of the earth is what may be called *Folk-music.* This Folk-music has been existing from time immemorial and will persist as long as a single folk-man lives. It is a matter of spontaneous growth and came into being, long before the science of music was evolved. It did not wait for the development of the scale. For, which mother would wait for it to sing her cradle songs?

Sometime back, I wrote to a Russian musician and got from him a written account of the Russian Folk-music. Again, I met an

Italian musician at Madras and got from him an account of the Italian Folk-music. In all my travels round India and Ceylon, I did not shut my ears to the Folk-music that obtained there. From a comparative study of the Folk-music of different countries, my conviction became more and more confirmed that :—

(1) Genuine Folk-songs emerge only from the folk-men.

(2) They know no science.

(3) They appeal more to the lower senses than to the higher ones.

(4) They merely express the folk-men's feelings in crude tunes.

(5) They are calculated to give an idea of the indoor and outdoor work of the folk people.

(6) At times, they attempt to describe such national events as made a deep impression in their minds.

(7) There is invariably a ring of sincerity or earnestness in a folk-singer.

The antiquarians collect and record the Folk-songs of their countries with a view to understand the feelings of the folk-people and evolve a history of the primitive people. They do not care for the tunes of the Folk-songs; and

that is why they record, in the Folk-song books, only the wording, and not the tune, of the Folk-songs. Again, the Government of a few countries send their agents to collect the Folk-songs for no other purpose than to see whether there is in them any seeds of sedition. Thus, the collection of the Folk-songs is more for historical and political purposes than for musical ones.

A question too often arises as to whether the Folk-songs should be sung now in regular music-parties and whether they should be taught to our boys and girls. It seems to me that to think of going back to the Folk-music savours of the tendency to prefer Chaucer's English to the modern English.

But, all the same, I grant that all the songs, sung now-a-days in a music party, should not be uniformly high and complicated ones, but should consist also of simple songs calculated to appeal even to the uninitiated portion of the audience. Such simple songs, composed by the moderns, should not, however, be confounded with the Folk-songs.

The moment when the musical scales were discovered, Art-music dawned; and the Folk-

music passed away, as though it were night.

A side-issue arises, at this stage, as to whether the time-honored *Samagana* belongs to Folk-music or to Art-music. It is a well known fact that the text of the *Samagana* is that of the *Rig-Veda* and that the *Rig-Veda* is the composition, not of the primitive Folk-men, but of the civilized Aryans. Hence, surely, the *Samagana* is not Folk-music. Is it, then, Art-music? Here opinions are divided. Since the idea of a Musical scale has never prevailed in *Samagana*, even unto the present day, that *Samagana* cannot be brought under the category of Art-music. But, on the other hand, it may be argued that, in as much as the imperfect scale of *Samagana* presents, when perfected, a sort of Kharaharapriya scale, the same *Samagana* may be deemed to be the nucleus of Art-music.

Art-music was first employed in prayer, worship, commemoration, narration, opera, and drama. On close observation, the music that was employed for any one of these purposes was found to have a *message* to deliver. Hence such music has been called Message or Recitative music. This *Recitative music*, humanity has been loving from time

immemorial and continues to love even now. It was only in the latter part of the 18th century A.D. that Lyrical music developed itself perceptibly in South India.

What is the point of differnce between Recitative and Lyrical music?

Under Recitative music come the *Kirtanas*, while under Lyrical music come the *Kritis*. Both Kirtanas and Kritis are not identical terms, as they are generally supposed to be. The vital point of difference between the two kinds of music is, while the Recitative (or Kirtana) music has the maximum of words with the minimum of music, the Lyrical (or Kriti) music has the maximum of music with the minimum of words.

While the Pre-Thyagaraja period was marked by the Recitative music, the Post-Thyagaraja period is characterised by the Lyrical music. Indeed, the person that undoubtedly changed the Carnatic music from its Recitative to the Lyrical stage was Thyagaraja.

Now, Lyrical music is not even a century old in South India; and its novelty and freshness have not yet begun to wear away. Hence

while Europe, according to Wagner, desires to turn back to the Recitative music, India (esp South India) tends to revel now in the Lyrical music.

If Purandra Das commenced the Kirtana Paddhati, Thyagaraja commenced the Kriti Paddhati. While Rama Das and Arunachala Kavi followed the former, Patnam Subramanier and Ramnad Srinivasa Iyengar closely followed the latter.

Purandra Das, being a Canarese man, rightly sang in Canarese. Rama Das, being a Telugu man, rightly sang in Telugu. Arunachala Kavi, being a Tamil man, rightly sang in Tamil. Even Thyagaraja was right in singing in Telugu, for he was a Telugu man. But what is the fun of Patnam Subramanier and Ramnad Srinivasa Iyengar singing in Telugu, they being Tamilians.?

Tamil, thus, ran the risk of losing the Lyrical phase of the Carnatic Music. Of recitative Tamil songs, we have plenty and even to spare. But as regards the Lyrical songs in Tamil, such master-singers as Patnam Subramanier and Ramnad Srinivasa Iyengar made them conspicuous by their absence.

We must therefore be grateful to God Padmanabha of Trivandrum for the graciousness with which He induced one of his staunch devotees to come to the rescue and save the Tamil Language from the reproach of having no Lyrical side of the Carnatic Music, by composing a large number of Lyrical songs in Tamil, which are on a par with Thyagaraja's Telugu Songs. Need I name that devotee? Sri T. Lakshmana Pillai of Trivandrum.

This time I made a pretty long stay here, only to sit at Sri Pillai's feet and learn as many of his Lyrical Songs, as possible, for those Lyrical Songs, in Tamil, form a distinct Milestone in the development of the Carnatic music. Sri Pillai may therefore be deservedly called "Tamil Thygaraja."

Dr. Cousins, a shrewd critic, wrote in an American Journal, that "in India religion expressed itself in songs from the Vedas of 3000 years ago to the Lyrical Songs of the gentle and venerable Lakshmana Pillai of Trivandrum."

Sri Pillai, being a cultured person of the modern type, rightly discarded the *mampahi*-types of songs, but employed his songs as vehicles of philosophical and ethical thoughts.

It was only the other day that Sri Allady Krishnaswami Iyer of Madras said, immediately after his return from his recent European tour, that he had noticed in the European countries a very strong desire and even a determined will to recognise the real artists and immortalise them in more ways than one. To whatever corner of Scotland he went, he saw Sir Walter Scott's statue or painting.

I do not see why the Trivandrum Public should not seriously think of erecting a statue for Sri T. Lakshmana Pillai or of placing, at least, an Oil-painting of his likeness in a prominent part of any public building here.

I must tell you that I am writing the biography of Sri Lakshmana Pillai. When that book becomes available in the open market, the rising generation that may come across it, is sure to raise a monument to Sri Pillai. Let the present generation therefore take time by the forelock and appropriate to itself all the credit of immortalising the name of the "gentle and venerable" Sri Lakshmana Pillai.

I appeal to the public of Trivandrum and indeed the whole of Travancore and even

beyond to think earnestly of my suggestion and see that it materialises in the near future. By honoring Sri Lakshmana Pillai, we honor the very cause of music."

These words of mine, coming as they did from the depth of my heart, sank deep in the hearts of the audience; and, ere long, a proposal to raise a memorial in commemoration of Sri Pillai's services to Music and Tamil literature began to take shape.

When on the 17th June of 1934, I went to Trivandrum, I was taken to Manakad, where I inspected Sri Pillai's Oil-painting-Portrait executed by Mr. Ramakrishna Asari as per the order of the Memorial Committee and found that the Portrait bore a strong likeness of Sri Pillai, when he was about between 40 and 50.

At the end of June 1935, the Travancore Government's sanction was received to place the Oil-painting-Portrait at the Museum Library Hall.

The unveiling function was fixed on August 3, 1935, to take place under the presidency of Mr. K. K. Pandalay, Retired High Court Judge of Madras.

The place of the function was the Law

College Hall. There was a bumper house and many people had to wait outside for want of space. Among the audience were five High Court Judges, four Peishkars, other prominent officers, and men of light and leading. Ladies and students also gathered in large numbers.

The proceedings commenced with music by Mrs. Lakshmi Narayanan Nair, Mrs. Sankaran Nair, and Smy. Annapurni Ammal. Mr. Justice Gopala Menon then delivered the Welcome Address, in the course of which he dealt with Sri Lakshmana Pillai's activities in the fields of the Carnatic Music, Tamil Literature and Humanitarian work.

The President unveiled, amidst enthusiastic applause, the portrait of Sri T. Lakshmana Pillai. The unveiling was performed by a button pressed by the President; and the electric contrivance made therefor was very much admired by the audience. Great credit is due to Mr. P. K. Krishna Pillai, M. A. of Science College, Trivandrum, who was responsible for this contrivance.

The thus unveiled Portrait was hung, in the first instance, at the local Museum Library Hall and was, later on, removed to the

Travancore University Buildings, where we can see it adorning a wall.

Dr. H. Subramani Iyer. M. A., Ph. D. Professor of Mathematics, Trivandrum Science College, and Joint Secretary of the Memorial Committee, read an Address which, enclosed in a beautiful Ivory Casket, was presented to Sri T. Lakshmana Pillai by Mr. G. P. Sekhar B. A., the other Joint Secretary and son of the late eminent Mr. G. Parameswaran Pillai of Travancore.

The following is the full text of the Address:—

"Worthy and Beloved Sir, We, your friends and admirers, beg leave to avail ourselves of this occasion, when we, in meeting assembled, pay you a well deserved tribute of honor, to give expression to our feelings of profound love and respect, deep gratitude and admiration, for the varied and valued services you have rendered to the cause of Tamil Literature and Carnatic Music. You come of an eminent and ancient family noted for rare integrity of character, tenderness of heart and liberal culture, and you have not only worthily maintained its high traditions, but have also imparted addi-

tional lustre to its illustrious name. Your varied talents as Scholar, Poet, Musician, Composer and Philanthropist, have spread your name far and wide, and your songs today are sung with exquisite relish all over the Indian Continent. Your gifts of intellect and of heart are so varied, forceful and pervasive, that we do not know which of your noble traits calls forth our deepest admiration.

It is in the sphere of true Art that you have laboured long and hard, and given to us and posterity a rich crop of poems and songs which, for loftiness of sentiment and sweetness of melody, stand unsurpassed. You have demonstrated with eminent success that your mother tongue "Tamil" is possessed of sufficient force, softness and elasticity to adapt itself to the high purposes of literature and art, and shown beyond cavil that it is as good as Telugu or any other Indian language for Lyrical music. You, Sir, have achieved celebrity as the "Tamil Thiagaraja", for, your songs form in the words of an Indian Musician of note, "a distinct Mile-stone in the development of Carnatic Music, in as much as they furnish us for the first time with Tamil Lyrical Music." Your Tamil poems are of equal excellence, highly praised

by Indian as well as European Savants; and they, in common with your songs, all contain, what the Rev. Mr. Popley calls, "an ethical note, struck clear and strong, above all mysticism and sacredness".

Art is beauty; truth; unity. It is no wonder therefore that, to a divinely-inspired artist that you are, considerations of caste or creed are of no account, and among your numerous pupils, who have received free instruction at your hands during half a century almost, are included men and women of every class and community. And likewise, countless others have benefited by your small daily benefactions, which, born of your broad outlook and catholic sympathies, have never been influenced by the accident of birth or faith.

Sir, one other prominent trait of your character is your lofty philosophy of life, which, besides ennobling your good self, has elevated those who have come in frequent contact with you. True to the Hindu ideal, you have taken "Ahimsa" or non-violence as the ruling principle and motto of your life, and the dumb creation of the Universal Father has found in you a doughty champion of its cause: You

are naturally therefore a firm believer in the comprehensive virtue of "Vegetarianism", and, fortified by the considered views of eminent scientists, you have been carrying on all these years a holy crusade against the slaughter of animals, proclaiming to the deluded world that the practice of vegetarianism is the only true foundation of individual, national and international peace.

Sir, you are thus a model of "Plain Living and High Thinking," and your Portrait which has this evening been unveiled by a distinguished son of this country and which, under the kind sanction of H. H. the Maharajah's Government, will be placed in the Library Hall of the Government Museum, will ever be an inspiration and example to coming generations.

In conclusion, Worthy and Beloved Sir, we send forth our heartfelt prayers to the Almighty God to grant you many more years of continued activity and service to your motherland, your mother tongue and humanity at large."

Sri Lakshmana Pillai replied in suitable terms. Whereupon the President added his quota of tribute to the honoured guest of the

evening. The function terminated with a vote of thanks proposed by Rao Bahadur K. Narayanan Pandalai and with the singing of Vanchisa Mangalam.

I feel bound to state, at this stage, that I had the privilege of a special invitation to attend the Unveiling Function at Trivandrum on 3rd August 1935; and I did attend it. I was further asked to speak on the occasion along with two others, Messrs V.M. Kalyanasundaram Pillai of the Tinnevelly Bar and M. Raman Pillai, Editor of the *Link*, Trivandrum. I at once availed myself of that opportunity to answer a question put to me by a friend of mine, Mr. K. G. Seshier (now deceased).

"You will be pleased to remember", I observed, "that, on 19th August 1933, I had delivered a speech in the Trivandrum Women's College Hall.* Immediately after that speech was over, Mr. K. G. Seshier asked me, though no doubt in private, "Have there not been predecessors either to Thiagaraja or Lakshmana Pillai who composed *Lyrical* songs either in Telugu or in Tamil?"

"In my hurry to catch the train, I did not

* See pp. 202—212.

answer that question in 1933. I shall answer it now in 1935. You all know of that Italian poet, Dante by name. He was, besides being a Poet, a great Reformer. Quite three centuries before Martin Luther effected the Continental Reformation, Dante had openly advocated the separation between the spiritual power and the civil power. But it was Luther's name, not Dante's, that has been handed down to us as the Champion of the separation between the spiritual power and the civil power. Why? Because Dante's cry was cabin'd, cribbed, and confined only to those few that heard it; while, Luther's cry served like a clarion call for almost the whole of Europe to muster under his banner.

"Quite similar is the case either with Thiagaraja or with Lakshmana Pillai. I admit there were predecessors both to Thiagaraja and Lakshmana Pillai who composed a few Lyrical songs. I go a step further. I admit there are a few contemporaries also to Sri. Pillai who composed a few Lyrical songs. But, Sir, the very fewness of the Lyrical songs composed, by the predecessors and the contemporaries shows that they struggled very hard to reach

the Lyrical stage; while, the super-abundance of the Lyrical songs composed by Thiagaraja and Lakshmana Pillai indicates that they not only actually reached the Lyrical stage, but also went to the extent of hoisting a flag, each in his own field. Hence, today's unveiling of Sri Lakshmana Pillai's Oil-painting-Portrait stands perfectly justified.

M. S. R.

APPENDIX.

A Proposed Humanitarian Movement,

IN TRIVANDRUM.

AN APPEAL

"He prayeth best, who loveth best
All creatures, great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all."

—**Coleridge**

"I would not number among my friends,
The man who needlessly set foot upon a worm.

—**Cowper**

Sympathy for the lower animals is one of the noblest virtues with which man is endowed.

—**Darwin**

INDIA is essentially a spiritual country. However strongly the material civilisation of the West may be engrafted on the spiritual life of the Indian nation, which has been germinated and shaped by its ancient and glorious past, it is almost certain that the essence of that spiritual life, with its vast and deep-laid bearings, cannot be wholly extinguished by any external agency whatsoever.

And this is as it should be. For the kernel of its spiritual philosophy, viz., that the Supreme Spirit of the Universe is *immanent* in all sentient creatures, is so profound that it may be said to be India's greatest gift to the world, and is a factor that can never be destroyed even by the mightiest civilisation on earth. Man is not merely an eating, money-making and pleasure-hunting animal, but he is also an animal capable of thought and universal love, --a spiritual being in whom the Divine effulgence definitely abides, in however humble a measure. He has therefore not only to canvass the means for his physical and material well-being here below, but also to prepare himself by building up a spiritual character of his own for a glorious and eternal life, which awaits him on the termination of his earthly career.

Out of one great mystery, man travels into another. The grim mystery of Death envelopes man at every step, always puzzles his imagination, and sometimes unnerves his will. Like a frivolous boy that plucks both flowers and buds with equal indifference, Death lays its icy hands on old and young alike. "Remember, man, that thou art dust and into dust thou shalt return," is a saying that has to be always recollected. It is therefore necessary for man to be always prepared to meet the grim monster Death, and to meditate on subjects higher than those immediately affecting his physical welfare here and now, to understand, in the light of all the knowledge available, what are his duties as a spiritual being, the performance of which will fit him for the life to come, and to question himself as to whether they have all been well and duly

performed. Let him consider what are his duties in regard to his spiritual relationship wiih his Creator, with his human brethren, and with the mute millions who stand below him in the scale of evolution, and who also are his brethren, though of a humblersort. Man's relationship towards God seems to be more or less understood by the various nations, as evinced by their religious devotion, however dim and vague their intellectual conception of Him may be. His relationship towards his human brethren has also been more or less definitely investigated, and the subject has been dealt with in the various ethical teachings of the nations. His spiritual relationship with his sub-human brethren, however, has not been adequately understood, accepted or realised, except in nooks and corners. St. Francis of Assissi spoke of animals as our "Little brothers." Any attention worth the name has been given to the subject in Western countries only in comparatively recent times.

Man, in the main, has been content to look to his own wants and comforts, entirely forgetting, or utterly ignoring the claims of the animal world for a peaceful existence, such as man desires for himself with all his heart and soul. Nay, he has further been making unjustifiable inroads into their peace, rights and liberties, and imagines himself untouchable by the consequences. Herein man has been illogical, unjust, selfish and cruel in the highest degree. His actions have been wholly out of harmony with the grand spiritual truth which he ought to realise, viz, that God is spiritually immanent in all His creatures. But some great spiritual and ethical leaders

like Buddha, Mahavira, Ramalingaswami and Tiruvalluvar have, by dint of their clear spiritual vision, not only perceived that truth, but preached, in the most unmistakable terms, kindness and love not alone towards other men, but also towards every sentient creature. It is strange that, in spite of such teachings, man should continue to believe that he cannot live except by cutting the throats of his fellow-creatures. But the struggle from barbarism up to real civilisation has been always a hard one. Darwin says:—"This virtue (humanity to animals) seems to arise from our sympathies becoming more tender and more widely diffused, until they are extended to all sentient beings. As soon as this virtue is practised and honoured by a few, it spreads, through example and instruction, to the young, and eventually becomes incorporated in public opinion." Ernest Seton Thompson, the celebrated friend of animals, says:—"We and the beasts are kin; the animals have nothing that man does not in some degree share. Since, then, the animals are creatures with wants and feelings differing in degree only from our own, they surely have their rights."

The humanitarian movement in India has been at least as old as Buddha, but in Western countries like England and America, it is of very recent growth. In the practical sphere, Vegetarianism, one of the most glorious of India's inherited virtues, is the direct result of the humanitarian point of view. In India, Vegetarianism has not only been long practised, but it has also been made communal, (a circumstance which has ensured its perpetuation), the highest castes being distinguished by the daily

practice of this laudable virtue. This practice has not only preserved the spiritual purity and humanitarian instincts of these castes, but it has further successfully saved many of them from the awful and tyrannous grip of some dreadful vices like Drink, and its attendant evils, with which the Western world, with all its civilisar tion, is even now terribly afflicted. Marie Correlli, in he- introduction to "Holy Orders", writes thus:—"The million whose labour makes the country's position and prosperity, are awaking to the realisation of the tyrann- ous grip in which themselves and their earnings are held by the Drink trade, and with the usual sturdy common sense which lies at the core of their being, they are begin- ning to question why they in their toiling thousands should be doomed, with their children, to disease and degra- dation for the benefit of a few Drink companies!......... In my present story, I have selected only one episode out of many tragedies,—tragedies which Drink writes across millions of homes and millions of lives." The prac- tice of eating the flesh of dead animals has ushered into existence the Monster Drink, from which and from cer- tain special and awful diseases, incidental to flesh diet, the easiest and most reliable escape for the world lies in accepting Vegetarianism. Vegetarianism has been found to be the only sane solution for the problem of Drink. This truth is now dawning into the minds of the thinking portion of the Western world, and as a consequence, Humanitarian and Vegetarian movements have been started and are being successfully worked in England, America and other countries, with a view to save mankind

from the terrible effects of intoxicants and of the violent feelings and warring instincts which a continuance of the flesh-eating habit has been proved to engender and nourish, and which have already plunged Europe into the fiercest and ghastliest wars ever witnessed by the world. The highest spiritual thinkers, all the world over, have been strict vegetarians. The Western world is now rallying to the conclusion that it is Vegetarianism that is going to be the great humanising factor of the future, and that it is the only virtue that is destined to usher in the long-dreamt-of Golden Age of the world.

But, though the Humanitarian movement has taken shape in India even from the time of the great Buddha, and Vegetarianism has been practised both individually and communally ever since his time, this healthy doctrine has been confined chiefly within the pale of certain castes only and has not been preached to the masses, and this is mostly due to the want of deep thinkers and courageous promulgators. But Vegetarianism is too wholesome a virtue to be the monopoly of any particular caste, and it should be preached to all human beings alike, vide, Tayumanavar:—

> Paraparam ! To all and each,
> It is my longing so to preach,
> That all the world the vow may ring,
> Never to kill a living thing.

Humanitarianism has not been conducted as a *movement*, except perhaps in the time of Buddha, Mahavira, Asoka and other spiritual leaders. At present, in Western

countries, the doctrines of humanitarianism and vegetarianism have been looked upon as so important as to require independent movements, and these movements have been systematically organised, though some scoffing non-vegetarians have attempted to belittle their importance by frivolously nicknaming them as 'fads'. Indeed every great movement was at one time treated as a fad by the unthinking and conservative portion of the world, but when its beneficent effects came to be known and appreciated in process of time, then it was hailed as an inestimable blessing. At present, in India, vegetarianism is only practised, excepting in noble individual cases, by certain communities, but seldom preached, except by some great men like the ever-memorable Mahatma Gandhi, and this is a serious defect, if not a dereliction of duty, on the part of those to whom its virtues are well-known. With a little thought, it would be apparent how, without such a virtue, we would fall lamentably short of the great spiritual ideal of universal benevolence.

With a view to remove this defect, it is proposed to start a Humanitarian and a Vegetarian movement, side by side, in this city of Trivandrum. An association by the name of the Trivandrum Humanitarian Society and another by the name of the Trivandrum Vegetarian Society will be organised and worked on the lines of similar societies in England and America. Books, pamphlets and leaflets will be obtained from other kindred societies and formed into a library for purpose of reference. Humanitarian and Vegetarian handbills and pamphlets will

be printed and issued to the public from time to time. The societies will also keep themselves in touch with their sister institutions all over the globe and profit by their sympathy, co-operation and experience. When the societies have, by the aid of Humanitarian sympathisers, become established facts, it is hoped that much solid work will be done in the direction of putting down animal sacrifices, preaching kindness to animals and stopping the wanton cruelties now perpetrated on them, mitigating the present barbarous nature of the slaughter of cows and other animals, affording protection and providing grazing grounds for cows and other cattle, encouraging the establishment of Goshalas, and extending the blessing of Vegetarianism to all classes of people,—achievements as surely worthy of the best endeavours of the cultured, as those of the spiritually inclined who have the welfare of their souls at heart, if the end and aim of all true culture is *noble living.* The movement will also be found to be a valuable lever and a strong buttress for Social Reform movements of the right sort which, without providing a solution for the diet question in India where communal vegetarianism exists, are bound to prove, as they have already so often proved, abortive.

All souls adore him that doth never take
A life, and cries, 'Of flesh do not partake!'

—**Tiruvalluvar**

Then craving leave, he spoke
Of life, which all can take, but none can give,

Life which all creatures love and strive to keep,
Wonderful, dear and pleasant unto each,
Even to the meanest; yea, the boon to all,
Where pity is, for pity makes the world
Soft to the weak and noble for the strong.

....

....

Radiant with heavenly pity, lost in care,
For those he knew not, save as fellow-lives.

—About Buddha in the 'Light of Asia.'

We beleive that if man is to receive help and guidance from above, he must help and guide what is below him; if his service to God is to be rewarded, he must reward that of dumb creatures, with care for their comfort and words of kindness; if he wants patience to be exercised with him, he must be patient; if he expects the whip to be spared over him, he must spare the whip; if he is to get happiness through God's love, he must love all God's creatures.

—Blue Cross Creed,
Massachusetts, U. S. A,

T. LAKSHMANA PILLAI B. A.,
Retired Major Treasury Officer,
Trivandrum.

1920.

APPENDIX II.

T. Lakshmana Pillai, the Man, by Mr. M. Raman Pillai.

Mr. President, Brother Lakshmana Pillai, Ladies and Gentlemen:—

To-day is not the generally supposed "dim, work-a-day Monday," for hearts of love meet to celebrate the coronation of friendship. Mr. T. Lakshmana Pillai is our common friend. The man whom we have befriended shines in the Composer, described by Mr. M.S. Ramaswami Aiyar who is to be to Mr. Lakshmana Pillai what Carlyle was to Sterling or Trevelyan to Macaulay, also in the Man of Letters delineated by Mr. Kalyanasundram Pillai.

It was in 1897 I met Mr. T. Lakshmana Pillai first in the capacity of his son's teacher, and that meeting made a distinct epoch in my mind, as distinct as that produced on young Helmholtz by Johannes Muller, or on young Darwin by John Stevens Henslow, or on young Jenner by John Hunter. Thirty-seven years have drawn us only closer, and he ranks the first in the very small list of my friends, and this enables me to speak a few words on this occasion, the proudest in my life, on Mr. T. Lakshmana Pillai—the Man, as I know him.

I need not in this case, as you know, follow the advice of Asquith to concentrate on delineating the figure of the man you are endeavouring to recall to life or that

in order to fill its natural role in the entire scheme of things; only in so doing can it properly express and more fully develop its own nature." This projection into another personality, this inner contact, this inclusive combination, find illustration in the life of Mr. Lakshmana Pillai, and these form the secret of the sweetness of his works and of his companionship. He has, in short, all the qualities that ennoble life, Faith, Devotion to Ideals, an end to fight for and to live for (Dewey). He has also Patience and Courage, which according to Dewey are the necessary marks of a liberal mind.

His works (their intent and content alike) express his character and modify the same. Judged by the only standard of measurement fixed by M. Maeterlinck viz., the dignity and permanence of their ideal and the abnegation wherewith it is pursued, his works deserve a high place.

Mr. Lakshmana Pillai in his walks is a study. It is generally "idea-finding walks" of Arnold Bennett. He is, what Wordsworth detected in Newton's statue, the "Index of a mind for ever voyaging through strange seas of thought alone;" and what an eminent German said of Faraday; "Er riecht die wahrheit." (He smells the truth), is true in the case of Mr. T. Lakshmana Pillai who smells the truth through songs.

Travels with him are inspirations and a solace. The impressions the songs of Saint Appar—sung by him in the holy precincts of Thiruppapur, the night we spent in Thyagaraja's simple home at Thiruvadi, and the night we spent at Vadaloor in the very room where Ramalingaswamy wrote his immortal work, "Jeevakarun-

yam" are still green and lead me to exclaim with W. Cory "What travelling is like that which takes one to the haunts of poets and the sancturies of historical nations?"

He is one of the influencing factors of the life of the rising generation and that influence is undoubtedly conducive to the good of the public. It is the world, not his family, as Conan Doyle observed of men of his type, that gets the fruit of his genius. His works have that moral basis, the want of which led Arnold Bennett to say after reading H. G. Wells' Bealby, "Amusing, but I don't yet see the moral basis of it." His works heard, are songs; digested, form an elixir of life. Contacts with him have great educative value. Does not the appeal of Prof. James still ring in our ears? "Above all things, offer the opportunity of higher personal contacts."

If the best claim one can make for higher education, in the words of James, is to enable us to know a good man when we see him, signs are not wanting among the rising generation of a higher education. Hundreds of young men and women from the college are seen flocking at Mr. Lakshmana Pillai's residence, and they come under the tonic influence of his songs. Remarkable is his entire aloofness from the political movements of the day. It may lead one to infer that he is either influenced by Burke's rather extravagant utterance, or has come more or less to the same conclusion that, "The very name of politician has always connected with it the ideas of treachery, cruelty, fraud and tyranny."

He is a true friend. "The paramount thing in his life was his capacity for friendship", said James of Davidson

This is equally applicable to T. Lakshmana Pillai. He loves man and his love never fades, for according to Mishna, 'Love without ulterior motives never fades'. It is said that man is built around his alimentary canal, but it is truer that he is built around his mind. The man is the mind. It is his wealth. Was it not Ben Jonson who exclaimed, "What a wretchedness is this, to thrust all riches outward. and be beggars within!"

He is a real conqueror. What Tyndal said of Faraday is without exaggeration true of T. Lakshmana Pillai. "Though he took no cities, he captivated all hearts."

He is past 3 score years and 10. Yet today his activity will be almost a model to a young man. He teaches any one music who loves music. The stream of his compositions is not frozen but full, limpid and clear, and scatters sweetness and light at almost every public function. His musical associations with centres of learning, take him now and then to Madras or Annamalainagar. A part of his time he devotes to Tamil Text Books. He exclaims with Dr. Simpson, "O that there were double twenty-four hours in the day." With all this he must play on his Veena, as it has become as much a necessity of life to him, as the Piano to Einstein.

The most remarkable thing is that in spite of all this industry, he is always calm. That is due to his well-formed character and, above all, his religion. To him, nature is *naturans* which presupposes a bond between nature and man's soul; not *natura naturata* i.e., a dead mechanism. He has the sense of the Infinite which Maurice Maeterlinck says is the source of all higher activity.

If I have understood my friend aright, his religion consists in the couplet of Kepler, "My highest wish is to find within, the God whom I find everywhere without."

What then is the value of T. Lakshmana Pillai? Prof. James asks: "How can we measure the cash value to France of a Pasteur,

—England of a Kelvin,
—Germany of a Ostwald,
—America of a Burbank",
and, let me add, —Travancore of a Lakshmana Pillai?

The wealth of a nation consists more than in any thing else in the number of superior men that it harbours (Prof. James.) He is one of S. Indian music's great trio of:—Thyagaraja, Swathi Thirunal and himself.

To-day hearts of love meet here to celebrate his achievements. What title does he want? We can more or less say of him what Thackeray said of Goldsmith:—

"To be the most beloved of writers,—
What a title that is for a man?"

This is the crown he wears today.

Travancore will justify herself as long as she breeds men like T. Lakshmana Pillai, men who are thinkers, and thinkers who are men. I shall fail in my duty and perhaps miss an occasion, if I do not acknowledge my gratitude and debt to him. He opened the gate of Concord to me, and in the words of the Sage of Concord, I have joy to say:—

"The fountains of my hidden life
Are through thy friendship fair."

Let me therefore close these observations with the greetings, not only for this year, but for the remainder of his life. The greetings of Faraday sent from Rome to his sister 120 years ago, express my feelings better: "Hail to the season!

May it bring every blessing down upon you;
May it fill your heart with gladness and your mind with contentment;
May it come smiling as the morn which ushers in the glorious light of a summer's day, and
May it never return to see you in sorrow and trouble!"